

Will Live Fetuses Be Used in Experiments?

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Two officials of the U.S. Catholic Conference, reacting to disclosures that federal health officials are debating the use of unborn human fetuses for research, decried the lack of ethical guidelines and "reverence for life" inherent in such experimentation.

Msgr. James T. McHugh, who heads the USCC's Family Life Division, said the research programs being considered by the National Institutes of Health "is a further indication of the eroding value placed on human life in a permissive abortion atmosphere."

He also charged that the U.S.

Supreme Court must share the responsibility for "encouraging experiments on fetuses" because of its recent abortion decision which said that the life of the fetus has no compelling value prior to viability.

Sister Virginia Schwager, SP, director of the USCC's Health Affairs division, said that disclosures of such proposed experimentation on living fetuses "reflect an immeasurable lack of reverence for human life."

The disclosures of debate by federal health officials over the use of newly-delivered human fetuses, produced by abortions, for medical research before they

die, were made in the Washington Post April 10. The report said debate centered on whether federal funds can support such research in a nation where millions consider abortion immoral.

The Washington Post said such a proposal to allow research on living fetuses was made to NIH some 19 months ago by the agency's Human Embryology and Development Study section, and approved with modifications in March 1972 by the National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council. The council, which did not make its statement public, is an advisory body to the National Institute of Child Health and

Human Development, a part of NIH.

Officials at NIH, according to the Post's story, reportedly differed on whether the recommendations had actually become NIH policy. The federal agency is the major source of federal funding for medical research.

Msgr. McHugh said: "Experimentation on humans — unborn humans included — is not merely a scientific question. It is a moral question requiring clear and carefully drawn ethical guidelines."

Declaring that such guidelines must of necessity be "quite restrictive," he cited "other experiences of scientific research conducted without due regard for ethical consideration — such as the atomic bomb (in World War II) and the Tuskegee study (of venereal disease among black men). He added: "We should realize that these questions cannot simply be left to the scientists and researchers."

With respect to the recent Supreme Court decision on abortion, the USCC official said

"news reports of the NIH proposals pinpoint the paradox. Researchers want to increase experiments on living fetuses obtained by abortion in order to learn more about blood, heart and other diseases in human beings, but the Supreme Court takes the position that there has always been strong support for the view that life does not begin until live birth."

Sister Schwager, referring to the Tuskegee study as an "unchecked use of human subjects in scientific research," said the need for biomedical research is vital. But she added that "it is equally imperative that such investigations be tempered by a proper ethical perspective which is based on profound respect for human dignity."

"Such revelations as those made concerning the possible adoption by NIH of a policy on the funding of research programs utilizing as subjects aborted fetuses evidence the fundamental need of Congress to rigorously study and regulate bio-medical experiments involving human beings."

Alternatives to Abortion Bills Roundly Supported at Hearing

Albany — Nearly all of the 44 speakers who came to the legislative hearing here last week on alternative to abortion legislation indicated strong support for the kind and direction of the bills being proposed.

The hearing, called by Oneida Sen. James Donovan, considered his five proposals now in the Senate.

Representatives from various child care organizations, pro and anti-abortion groups, Right to Life and Birthright organizations and individual, interested citizens attended.

Two young citizens, one a high school senior and the other an unwed mother in her mid-twenties, were particularly interesting.

The young mother, now in the process of redirecting her life and caring for her child, spoke of the frustrations she faced when first she discovered her pregnancy.

Everyone, it seemed, urged abortion. "University health centers counsel for abortion, but not the alternatives," she said. "There is an abundance of pro-abortion information. The people I encountered were intimidating," she said.

James Matthews, 17, from Long Island, was applauded when he said:

"I am seventeen and idealistic. I hold visions and dreams about how things should be, but I find them hard to keep in face of reality today. I hold precious every day of everyone's life. We say life should end with dignity, I think it should also begin with dignity."

The new package of alternative to abortion bills include:

—Child life centers to assist with any problems relating to pregnancy. These would help with information on maternal care, prevention for child abuse, etc. They also would be a municipal contact point for control of VD. The centers also will act as information and referral places for child adoption inquiries and all requests for services and programs available to the handicapped, retarded and those suffering from birth defects.

—Grants in aid for parents adopting a mentally or physically handicapped child.

—A requirement that health insurance companies provide full maternity benefits as they now provide full expense reimbursement for abortions.

—State funded birth insurance for a family who has a child with congenital defects needing special care.

—Support now only provided by the federal government, for New York State's birth defects institute.

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ALL IN THE FAMILY
Sarah Child

When we were going over blueprints for this house one of the basic requirements I had was that I be able to open a door from the kitchen and step into the backyard.

So unhinged was I about this particular stipulation that I drove the tract salesman (who revises the original standardized plans) slightly wild.

This happened because I was also insisting that the kitchen and adjoining family room be as naturally bright as possible.

The solution, which I happen to be crazy about but which still causes some visitors to shake their heads in dismay, was a simple one.

Replacing the original two small, double hung windows in the eating area and a standard kitchen type door (wood with a couple small panes of glass) at the rear of the family room are two sets of sliding glass doors only four feet apart.

And this morning I came down at 6:30 and stepped out to check if the honeysuckle were leafing out; to see just how cold the air was, and to satisfy my soul that indeed I am no longer "housebound."

The compulsion about this sort of thing started at least 15 years ago when I started renting a series of apartments that all seemed to be ill-lit, third floor, garret-type apartments.

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In some of them not even the windows opened. To find out what the weather was like or to feast one's eyes on a blade of green grass I had to climb down two flights of stairs as well as manipulate a series of doors, storm and otherwise.

Lazy soul that I am I never bothered to do anything except sigh a lot and wish I lived closer to the ground.

Since then psychiatrists have railed against popular high-rise constructions for both the mentally ill and the aging.

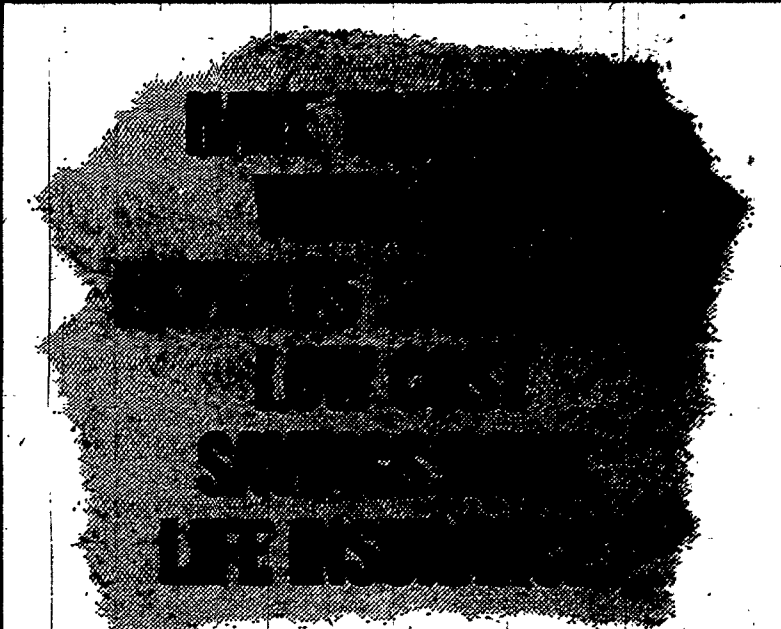
The experts on emotional health tell us that high rise living tends to put people out of touch with reality, particularly those who are not forced to leave the building regularly for a job or other commitment.

I could not agree more. There is something very special about feeling the ground under your feet, breathing the fragrance of grass and shrubs and trees and having easy access to both.

Communing with nature should not be treated as a luxury but recognized as the necessity that it is. One that refreshes our bodies, heightens our senses and restores our spirits.

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