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Cloning

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"The real nature of this decision is in danger of being obscured by the use of euphemisms and misleading terms — including efforts to redefine the term 'cloning' for political purposes," Quinn said.

The definition of human cloning agreed upon by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Institutes of Health, the National Bioethics Advisory Commission and long-standing federal law defines the procedure as somatic cell nuclear transfer used to create a human embryo, Quinn's letter said.

By that definition, the Brownback-Landrieu bill is the only pending legislation that would accomplish the purpose of banning human cloning, she wrote. "It is also the only bill found acceptable by the House and the only one President Bush has said he is willing to sign into law."

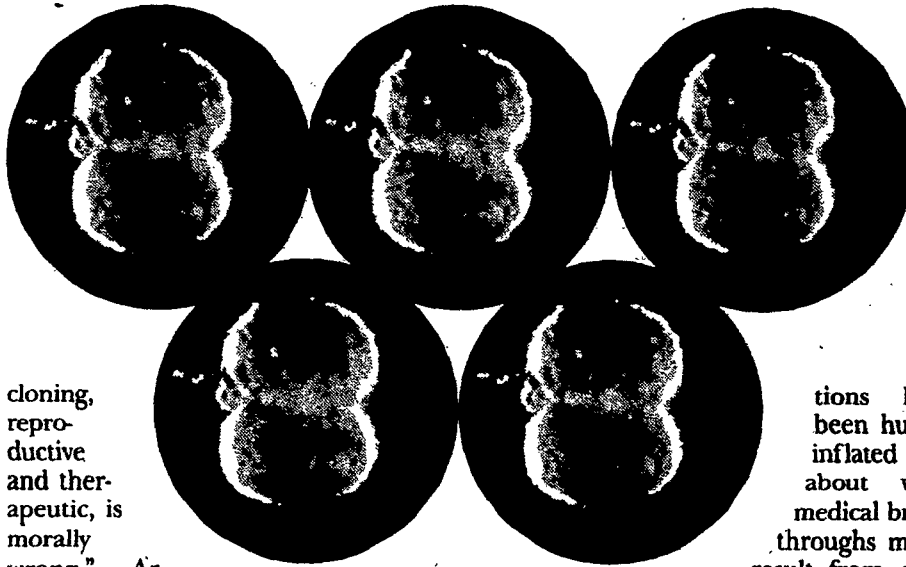
The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a high-profile hearing March 5 with witnesses, including actor Christopher Reeve, speaking in support of another cloning bill, one of several Quinn said would not ban the use of the cloning procedure in humans for any purpose.

"In short, they allow cloning without meaningful limit, but impose heavy fines and a 10-year prison sentence on anyone who places a cloned embryo in a womb," Quinn said. "These bills raise serious issues of morality as well as enforceability... however, they simply do not ban human cloning. Rather, they facilitate such cloning for purposes of research — research that does not have, and may never have, any possible clinical use."

Quinn said such bills constitute an effort "to ensure that human clones will be mass-produced in our nation, but only in order to be killed for speculative benefit to others." Such research "is as ineffectual in preventing human cloning as it is irresponsible in its attitude toward developing human life," she added.

Quinn's stance is backed by Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester's office of Catholic Charities.

"Our position is supportive of the USCCB. We take the position that all human



cloning, reproductive and therapeutic, is morally wrong," Armantrout said.

"Therefore we are supporting S.1899."

"Cloning commodifies human life," she added.

Apparently, these conclusions are also being reached by others who come to the issue from many directions.

Kathleen Strotman, a legislative assistant for Landrieu, said her boss concluded that all human cloning should be banned partly out of concern that human bodies were, as Armantrout stated, being "commodified."

And some of the 100 Democrats who voted for the House bill "had 100 percent NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League) voting records," said Rep. Dave Weldon, R-Fla., a physician who supports S.1899. Though some supporters came from the right-to-life or sanctity of life perspective, others came at it from women's concerns, he explained.

Judy Norsigian, president and founder of the Boston Woman's Health Book Collective, which publishes the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, said leaders of the women's health movement have strong reservations about cloning research. She supports a moratorium on human cloning, something none of the three pending bills would create.

"There is massive confusion about embryonic stem-cell research and cloning," Norsigian said. While she supports embryonic stem-cell research, cloning is another story altogether, she said.

For one thing, Norsigian said expecta-

tions have been hugely inflated about what medical breakthroughs might result from cloning. And there has

been virtually no study of what effect cloning technology might have on the creation of "designer babies" or on the effects on women's bodies of supplying eggs for cloning projects, she added.

Two women who attribute their drastic health problems to taking the fertility drug Lupron warned against allowing cloning research because it would create a new, lucrative market for women to provide eggs for research. The result would be more people suffering from dangerous side effects of fertility drugs, they said.

"There is concern that women will be exploited. Most likely poor women will be paid to take very powerful fertility drugs," Armantrout remarked.

Also at the Senate briefing, Brent Blackwelder, president of Friends of the Earth, distributed a letter from leaders of environmental groups including the Sierra Club, Greenpeace and Physicians for Social Responsibility. The letter to senators called for a ban on studies to clone human beings and a moratorium on creation of cloned human embryos for research.

The environmentalists noted that "the pursuit of cloning technology is being driven to a great extent by profit-driven firms and a very small number of scientists," many of whom "are irresponsibly dangling highly unrealistic visions of miracle cures before the American people."

The Senate briefing also included prepared statements from several scientists

who oppose cloning.

"Even if human therapeutic cloning were acceptable on religious, moral and/or cultural grounds, it is scientifically unsound to proceed with (it)," wrote Marie A. Di Berardino, professor emeritus of biochemistry at the Medical College of Pennsylvania-Hahnemann School of Medicine, who has done her own research on cloning frog cells.

The results of cloning experiments on animals, thus far, provide another strong argument against human cloning, according to Armantrout. "Cloned animals have up to 400 times the defects that those delivered naturally did," she said.

Armantrout thinks that research instead should be directed toward adult stem-cell research. "There are limited research dollars. If we're starting to see progress in that area, I don't want to see the money siphoned off into the ifs and maybes of something that's morally wrong," she stated. "There is a sizable percentage who clearly see all cloning is going too far. All Americans need more information about treatments and technologies with adult stem cells."

Armantrout emphasized that this does not include embryonic stem-cell research. She cited cases in which successful adult stem-cell treatment has been performed on patients with diabetes, spinal-cord injuries, immune deficiencies, and corneal damage, Parkinson's disease and heart disease. By contrast, the USCCB notes that not one person with these diseases so far has benefited from embryonic stem-cell treatment.

Much in the same way that human cloning could render fetuses disposable, Armantrout said she feels the same danger exists with embryonic stem-cell research. Mary Jane Owen, executive director of the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, echoed that concern in a 2001 statement:

"Based on our convictions about the value of human life and its origin at conception, we have opposed the harvesting and use of embryonic and fetal stem cells for research," Owen said. "We find totally abhorrent the view that extremely immature human life can be used as a product for research or to enhance the quality of life of another person."

Contains reporting by Mike Latona in Rochester.

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