



TESTIMONY OF:
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TO:
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND CORRECTIONS

ON:
HB 2128 – THE BANNING OF HUMAN CLONING IN THE COMMONWEALTH
APRIL 2, 1998
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Good afternoon. I am Michael Geer, President of the Pennsylvania Family Institute, a statewide non-profit research and education organization, based in Harrisburg, that focuses on policies and cultural trends that impact families. Much like when a factory or shopping center is built, an environmental impact study is required; we at the Pennsylvania Family Institute analyze policies and social trends that affect the most basic building block of our society – the family.

The subject of today's hearing, human cloning, strikes right at the very heart of family – what family truly is, what it means to be part of a family, and the role that family plays in the nurture and development of human beings. The Pennsylvania Family Institute stands squarely against human cloning, and strongly supports its ban.

As we come to the end of the 20th century, and indeed, the end of the millennium, I think it is useful to take a brief look at the years gone by in this century in which we saw exponential leaps in science and technology. Today we take for granted many things our great-grandparents only could have dreamed about, thanks to science and technology.

But through this century we have also learned many lessons, both practical and moral, about the limits of science and technology, and the willingness of mankind to use this science in dangerous and evil ways. Unfortunately, we often have to relearn them again and again.

Early in this century, technology made bold proclamations about a ship that was so amazingly designed and built, that "not even God could sink it." The cost of that titanic arrogance was more than 1,500 lives. But we also learned that human lives should not be offered up on an altar of technological arrogance and showmanship. And so, now even the most modern ships are equipped with sufficient lifeboats to save every life on board.

There were some other terrible lessons learned this century here in America. One significant, but little talked about lesson is on America's involvement and leadership in the eugenics movement in the early 1900's. The word eugenics was coined by English scientist Francis Galton , who took the word eugenics from a Greek root meaning "good in birth" or "noble in heredity." He intended it to denote the "science" of improving human stock by giving the "more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance at prevailing speedily over the less suitable."

His ideas caught on here in America, and by 1915, three years after the Titanic disaster, this was reported in the news:

Mrs E.H. Harriman's gigantic eugenic enterprise at Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island to ascertain "what is the matter with the human race" launched a campaign today for the sterilization of 15-Million Americans.

“Coincident with this amazing statement comes the exclusive announcement through the International News Service of the plans of the Eugenic Society which will have at its disposal the vast fortunes of Mrs. Harriman, the liberal financial assistance from J.D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, and scientific aid from Alexander Graham Bell and the greatest host of scientists ever joined in a huge undertaking.

The committee estimates that it will be essential similarly to treat annually an increasing number as the population increases, until in 1980, 415-thousand persons in the United States alone will be sterilized every year. When that time arrives there will have developed, the committee believes, a practically perfect manhood and womanhood.¹

During that same time period, state fairs in Kansas and elsewhere held “fitter family contests” where families were judged for their breeding like pigs or cattle.

We didn’t escape it here in P ennsylvania. At a sesquicentennial celebration in Philadelphia, the American Eugenics Society exhibit included a board, which, like population counters of a later day, revealed with flashing lights that “every fifteen seconds a hundred dollars of your money went for the care of persons with bad heredity, that every 48 seconds, a mentally deficient person was born in the United States, and that only every seven and a half minutes did the United States enjoy the birth of a ‘high grade person... who will have the ability to do creative work and be fit for leadership.’” An exhibit placard asked, "How long are we Americans to be so careful for the pedigree of

our pigs and chickens and cattle, and then leave the ancestry of our children to chance or 'blind' sentiment."²

I present these news dispatches from history as a reminder that science can “get away from us” and that even the most “brilliant minds” and “greatest hosts of scientists” can still lead us astray. Unfortunately, America was not turned away from its eugenic mindset until the horrors of Nazi Germany evidenced the natural extrapolation of these dangerous ideas. We are not God, and we get in deep trouble when we try to play God.

Now, to cloning, and the proposed ban here in the Commonwealth. As I stated earlier, the Pennsylvania Family Institute supports prohibiting cloning of all human beings through somatic cell nuclear transfer. On this point, the vast majority of Americans agree. In an ABC News poll, released on *Nightline* last year, 87 percent of those polled said the cloning of a human being should be banned. 82 percent said cloning human beings would be morally wrong, and 98 percent said they personally would not choose to be cloned.

Beyond popular opinion is the question of whether human cloning is right or wrong. I believe it's wrong, for several reasons.

Humans as guinea pigs. Cloning is not a routine process. Few people realize that the successful creation of Dolly, the cloned sheep, came only after hundreds of failed attempts. Before researchers Jerry Hall and Robert Stillman succeeded in cloning a human embryo in 1994, they created and destroyed numerous human embryos. Literally hundreds of live human embryos will have to be brought into existence to overcome the technological hurdles of cloning a human embryo that grows into maturity. These embryos will not be treated as intrinsically valuable human beings, which they are, but

rather as things to be used to further the ends of science and the benefit of others. To quote C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D., "The dignity of individual human lives both prescribes and proscribes how human beings are to be treated. Human beings may not be used as means to our own ends. They may not be the subjects of experiments without their knowledge and permission. We may not demean human beings by imposing upon them conditions they might not have consented to, if allowed to make the decision for themselves."³ He goes on to say "These principles would make immoral most of the reasons which have been suggested as reasons to clone human beings. Thus, human clones would not be suitable 'organ farms' for those needing transplantable organs. Human clones would not be acceptable 'substitutes' for children who died leaving their parents grief stricken. Human clones would, likewise, be ethically unacceptable candidates as 'icons' in some kind of narcissistic cult of self worship."⁴ Human cloning would be offensive to millions of Pennsylvanians who hold the view that all human life -- whether embryo, fetus, infant or adult -- is created in the image of God and sacred.

Let's look further:

- 1) **Human cloning would have an inevitably deleterious effect on the formation of natural, biological families, and would thus contribute to the breakdown of the traditional family.** Francis Beckwith, a philosophy and law professor at Trinity International University in California asks says this: "Imagine if an infertile couple were to produce a clone of the male partner in order to have a child. The clone would technically be the father's twin -- and therefore a brother -- and not the father's son, because sons are the product of the union of man's genetic code with a woman's.

And what if this couple were to clone another child, but this time, it is the female partner's clone? Technically, this would be the sister-in-law of the father's twin."

The bottom line: the distinctions between parent, child, sister and brother, which ground our notion of family life, are at risk of becoming unraveled if cloning is treated as just another exercise in reproductive rights.

- 2) **It is not needed to address the problem of infertility.** While infertility is a pressing problem for thousands of couples, there are numerous treatments and techniques available to remedy this problem. Because of its profoundly un-natural quality, it is simply unrealistic to expect cloning to solve the infertility problem. In addition, cloning held in this sense profoundly changes the nature of childrearing and adoption of naturally-born children. And the problem of infertility is largely behavioral. A little reported fact of the infertility problem is that 75% of all couples having trouble having children have STD's. It makes no sense to promote an grossly un-natural alternative to infertility when, in many cases, the solution is overwhelmingly behavioral.
- 3) **Human cloning for the production of "spare parts" is wrong.** While Dolly the sheep made headlines, it was not widely reported that researchers in Texas and England had, through genetic manipulation, successfully cloned headless mice and tadpoles. The ominous significance of this process is this – that someday, headless or brainless humans would be cloned for the purpose of providing organs for transplant and other spare parts. This is not a far-fetched idea – Princeton biologist Lee Silver told the *London Sunday Times* "It would be almost certainly possible to produce human bodies without a forebrain. These human bodies without any semblance of

consciousness would not be considered persons, and thus it would be perfectly legal to keep them 'alive' as a future source of organs." The specter of this possibility alone argues for a ban on human cloning in my view.

This ban, and the amended House Bill 2128 would not prohibit cloning of human tissue for beneficial medical research and cells, or research involving cloning of plants or animals. It would simply put into law the respect for all human life that civilized society requires.

I am not surprised that there remain those in science who balk at any ban on human cloning, and others who want a free hand to experiment with cloned human embryos they will then kill. As George Annas pointed out in 1989, "Ethics is generally taken seriously by physicians and scientists only when it either fosters their agenda or does not interfere with it. If it cautions a slower pace or a more deliberate consideration of science's darker side, it is dismissed as 'fearful of the future,' anti-intellectual, or simply uninformed."⁵

The experience of the 20th century tells us that science that is uninformed or unrestrained by moral and ethical guidelines adopted by and for the society as a whole for its own good, can be a dangerous thing. The Pennsylvania Family Institute wholeheartedly supports a ban on human cloning here in the Commonwealth.

¹ International News Service, New York, Sept. 2, 1915, quoted in *In the Name of Eugenics*, Daniel Kevles, p. 142.

²Kevles, p. 62

³ C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D. "A Protestant Perspective on Cloning," *Ethics & Medicine*, 1998, p. 27

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ George J. Annas, 'Who's Afraid of the Human Genome,' *Hastings Center Report* (1989) p. 21