

Nothing Inevitable

BY Dave Andrusko

“On February 24, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals said that U.S. District Judge Susan Diott had erred when she concluded that every law which regulates abortion must contain a general health and life exception. Writing for a three-member panel, Judge David McKeague said ‘close scrutiny of the case law reveals that no such blanket requirement has been imposed.’”

“Abortion Laws Do Not Always Require Health Exceptions, Appeals Panel Rules,” back cover

“In his letter [to OB/GYN News regarding RU486], [Hakim-Elahi, former medical director for PPFA’s New York affiliate] quoted statistics from a study of 43,410 RU486 abortions at Planned Parenthood in 2003. Hakim-Elahi noted that 141 women required surgical follow-up, 49 were treated in an emergency room for heavy bleeding, 20 had required blood transfusions, and 7 were admitted to hospitals for infection.

“If I were to receive such a report from a surgical abortion clinic,” Hakim-Elahi wrote, “I would recommend to health authorities that the clinic be immediately shut down.”

“Abortionist: RU486 Regimen ‘Unsafe,’” page 18

“The smallest surviving premature babies eventually attain levels of education, employment and independence that are almost indistinguishable from those of normal weight babies, according to the latest findings from a continuing Canadian study that began 28 years ago.”

New York Times, February 28

“Since 1998, when researchers at the University of Wisconsin discovered how to isolate and develop human embryonic stem cells, no human disease or condition has been successfully treated using them. By contrast, nearly 80 therapies—actual treatments and not just research—now use adult stem cells. There have been more than 250 adult stem cell clinical trials.”

Investor’s Business Daily, February 23

“Bottom line: There was nothing inevitable about Roe, not legally, not politically, not medically, not socially. The Roe abortion regime is a monumental injustice to women and their children and a monstrous aberration of law. It must end.”

Susan Wills’ review of *Dispelling the Myths of Abortion History*, a new book written by Villanova Law School Professor Joseph W. Dellapenna, on page 18

I know you must be asking yourself, what do all these excerpts have in common? Simple: They turn conventional wisdom on its head.

Not so long ago the truth about abortion was buried so deep in lies, misrepresentations, and urban legends you needed a forklift just to move the debris around. But over the past decade countless scholars, researchers, journalists, and (most important) citizens just like you have done much of the heavy lifting. Doesn’t mean we’re there yet; it does mean we’re making serious headway.

The received wisdom—what “everybody knows”—about abortion can also be seen as a slab of concrete. You need a jackhammer to break through. But that’s exactly what the truth can do; it’s that powerful. For example, we’re told—occasionally even by (more or less sincere) pro-abortionists—that darn, too bad Roe was handed down. They didn’t need a national edict—which is what Justice Blackmun gave them in Roe and Doe—to carry the day.

“Liberalization” was inevitable. Nationalizing the abortion debate, they lament, only created a furious backlash in the form of the Pro-Life Movement.

Not so. I am not saying that the abortion “reform” movement had essentially ground to a halt by 1971–72, but I almost am. There was nothing inevitable about future pro-abortion successes in the states.

As we continue tearing down the walls of the fortress which is Roe and Doe brick by brick, we need not only to carefully assess the present and the future, but also thoughtfully ponder what previously took place (and didn’t take place) and why!

Unseating the thoroughly ensconced myth about human embryonic stem cell research “success” and making clear the dangers of the abortifacient RU486 is proving almost as difficult as getting pollsters and reporters to write that Roe did not merely legalize abortion “in the first trimester,” but essentially throughout the entire period of nine months the baby is busy bulking up.

The rapturous prose about the “potential” of stem cells scavenged from human embryos seems almost impervious to reason. That’s bad enough. But as the quote from Investor’s Business Daily illustrates, while good news about morally acceptable alternatives spurts out like an oil well gusher, it is utterly and completely ignored.

This is probably another example of outlasting the bad guys, giving truth a chance to catch up. Remember the hype in the 1980s and 90s about the allegedly infinite potential of brain tissue scavenged from the brains of aborted babies to cure everything from the common cold to AIDS? Over time it proven to be an overwhelming failure.

Indeed, when transplanted into humans there were often grotesque results. Housed in an unnatural environment, the transplanted fetal brain tissue often would act out like an out-of-control adolescent. Recipients did not benefit; more typically they faced serious side-effects.

Let me offer just a word or two about the abortifacient RU486. Dr. Randall K. O’Bannon’s story on page 11 is a model of clarity and comprehensiveness. In a nutshell, there was once a trickle of research indicating that RU486 posed serious, even lethal, health risks to women. Now it’s beginning to resemble a flood. Nonetheless, alas, Australia has paved the way for its use in that nation.

Rather than rehearse all that I wrote, let me encourage you to read the story that begins on the back cover. When the Supreme Court returned New Hampshire’s parental notification case (Ayotte) back to the lower courts, there were numerous interpretations but one shared conclusion: it appeared the justices were signaling that they would no longer routinely toss out entire protective laws if it could be shown that only a small segment was—or might be construed as being—in conflict with previous Supreme Court precedent. In other words, the High Court was not going to give pro-abortionists an automatic total victory just for showing up.

A panel of the Sixth Circuit carefully looked at Ayotte and other cases. It concluded that it is not true that just because a statute regulates abortion in some manner, that means the law automatically (or “per se,” as the lawyers call it) needs a health exception. Right now we have only a skeletal understanding; it’ll be fleshed out in the months and years to come.

What matters is that the umpires have decided that pro-lifers are no longer out before they come to the plate. We will get a chance to bat.

Finally, how many times have you read the most abysmally pessimistic assessments of the future prospects of babies born prematurely? Is there ever good news? Yes, there is.

The Canadian study discussed in the New York Times began 28 years ago. This is solid, careful science.

“By most measures, researchers found no substantial differences between people born at exceptionally low weights and those born at normal weights,” according to the Times. “The rates—including high school graduation, pursuit of postsecondary education, aspects of employment, independent living, marriage and parenthood, did not differ significantly between groups.”

The senior author of the study told the Times, "Children who appear disabled at 2 or 3 are not necessarily doomed to a lifetime of disability." Dr. Saroj Saigal added, "These young adults were able to achieve much more than we expected."

And that might be a fitting description of your and my efforts: we are able to achieve much more than anyone would have anticipated. We have, in spite of the mythunderstandings that clog public discussion. Even as I was writing this editorial a mere 13 hours before NRL News went to print, there was change everywhere. States are aggressively pushing back against the Roe regime, probing for weaknesses and shoddy defenses.

As you have, keep doing your part to make this a safer world for unborn babies and their mothers. As I have said for the longest time, it is only a matter of time before one day we look, scratch our heads in befuddlement, and ask, "We actually did that to our own children?"