



NEW WORLD NEWS

THE COST OF ABORTION

Vol 28 No 11 9 February 1980 9p

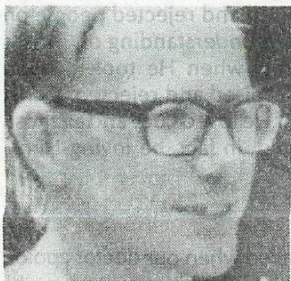
John Corrie's bill, debated this week at Westminster, seeks to limit the cases in which abortion is available. It has caused a flurry of editorials and letters in the newspapers, and demonstrations, for and against, outside Parliament.

The bill comes at a time when many have begun to take easy abortion for granted. The furor focuses deeper issues in our society, writes Dr JOHN LESTER. Do we believe that God created man, and that man, therefore, does not have absolute power over his own life and that of others? Or do we reject this belief and formulate our own rules?

OUR PRESENT ABORTION BILL became law on 27 April 1968. Those who brought it before parliament believed that it would tidy up the muddle of previous legislation and get rid of the back street abortionist. One of the bill's sponsors, David Steel, said, 'It is not the intention of the promoters of the bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on request.'

But many of those who had long been fighting for such a bill did want abortion on request—and that is what they achieved.

In the first year after the Act was passed, 40,000 abortions were performed. The present figure per year, which is still rising, is 148,000. In 1969 4.8 per cent of all successful pregnancies were terminated. In 1979 17.9 per cent were.



John Lester

At the time most gynaecologists were against the bill. They put forward medical, social and ethical objections—but it was still passed. But the main reason why most gynaecologists opposed the bill was that they did not like performing abortions because they felt at heart that it was wrong.

Some gynaecologists refused to compromise their beliefs and have not altered their practice of performing no, or very few, abortions. The majority reluctantly gave way, and so the number of abortions performed has steadily risen.

Now, as the new bill comes before parliament to curb the excesses of the previous bill, some of the doctors who twelve years ago were against relaxing the abortion law are now against any reduction in what they are allowed to do. There are medical reasons for their objections to the new bill, but the

fact is that they now accept the concept of easy abortion which they rejected before. This suggests that if someone does what he believes to be wrong often enough, he no longer believes it to be wrong.

This simple truth is something which, as a nation, we must face. Abortion can be considered a form of violence. Whether we look at terrorism, violent demonstrations, or hooliganism we have accepted a measure of violence as normal. Life has become that much less sacred.

Salvation

A young girl comes to the clinic asking for the Pill. She is not married. Some years ago the question was, 'How far should you go?' Now it is, 'How often do you do it?' And in spite of the widespread use of contraceptives and an increasing number of sterilisations, the abortion rate has still soared. Is the energy we spend on such permissiveness to some extent responsible for the lack of energy we demonstrate as a nation, such as our poor trading performance?

The gradual erosion of our standards—for instance as to what is acceptable on TV, stage and screen—has blinded us to how far those standards have slipped. Is it the same insensitivity that deadens us to what the other person feels, the other sex, the other class, the other race, the other country?

A car worker told me the other day that he simply could not trust the management. Leaving class feelings aside, have we allowed so much lying to be considered normal that we can no longer trust one another?

If we will only return to the premise that man, created by God, is subject to His dominion, then we will have a battle on our hands, but it can be won. If we allow the nation to follow the atheistic argument, then we have to abide by the consequences.

But the question of abortions will continue to haunt us. For every foetus is potentially a human being and will develop into a person with abilities and faults, and the chance to contribute to our society for good or ill

unless we destroy it. Yet we are snuffing out the lives of 148,000 every year. We cannot know how many Beethovens, Churchills or Crippens we have destroyed. But we have to face that we cannot do what we are doing without some cost to our society.

Some abortions are for pregnancies where there is the risk of an abnormal baby. But here too our agnostic philosophy teaches us to drive out pain and suffering, rather than teaching us to cope with it. We forget that pain and suffering are one of the most important ways that people find God.

As a nation, we have, over abortion and much else, rejected moral absolutes and turned to pragmatism based on self-interest. The result is a society which has lost direction and motivation. The Right points to monetarism. The Left to socialism. But neither leads us to the *fundamental—obedience* to the God who created us. And there, I believe, lies our salvation.

25 years after an abortion

In 1977 the Swiss people rejected an attempt to relax their law on abortion. For one Swiss woman, who had had an abortion, this debate was a turning point. She writes:

TWENTY-FIVE years ago I was expecting my fifth child. I was a happy mother; in good health; it was a happy household. Of course, I made some mistakes in bringing up my children—but love was there and that made up for everything. I had learnt early on that each child was a blessing.

The birth of the fourth child was very difficult. It was a traumatic time and six months later when I found I was pregnant I wasn't prepared to go through the same thing again. The people around me weren't happy about the coming of a new child, so I gave in to the idea of an abortion even though deep down I knew it was wrong,

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25 YEARS contd from p1

right up to the time I went into the operating theatre. I shut out the 'inner voice' which said, 'Don't do that'.

A few days after the operation I got a serious infection and almost died. On my husband's first visit to the hospital I felt that our relationship was no longer what it had been. Now I feel that if my husband and I had accepted the arrival of this child it could have helped to draw us together. From the *wrong decision* we made together there came a coolness which lasted through the remaining ten years of my husband's life. I went home *physically worn out*, with my nerves completely unstrung.

That was only one small part of the consequences. A woman receives maternal love at the birth of a child she joyfully accepts. This love, not only for the aborted child but also for the other four, had now died. Deprived of this and sensing a change in me, my children were shaken in a way which upset their whole life and that of the family. We no longer enjoyed talking at table and we rarely sang. We had to force ourselves to lighten the atmosphere. Twenty-five years later, our children still have

Lucy means light

by Robert and Margaret Hansford

WE HAVE three children, Ann aged seven, Mark five and Lucy two. The first two were quite a struggle to produce. Ann was born by Caesarean Section at the last moment. Mark weighed in at nearly ten pounds. But Lucy slipped into this world with very little effort at a mere five and a half pounds.

When Lucy was born she had jaundice and a low blood sugar content, so she was taken straight up to the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital. Robert was asked to see the consultant at ten o'clock next morning.

We were apprehensive. It could only mean bad news, we thought. Was she malformed in some way or had she suffered brain-damage? During the long wait we both tried to convince ourselves there was nothing wrong.

Sunlight

The next morning the pediatrician told first Robert and then both of us together that Lucy was a mongol. We were shattered. He was very kind and told us in some detail what having a mongol in the family was likely to involve, but we hardly heard him.

When he left we wept and then we asked God why He should do this to us. His answer was very clear, 'Lucy will love you as I do. Lucy means light. My guidance will be clearer and brighter because of her. She will be a super little spirit, perfect in a way that most humans are not capable of achieving. She will keep you on the straight and narrow path that leads to me. Rejoice, she is a gift from Heaven. Inasmuch as you do it to the least of these my little ones, you do it to me.'

problems which began at that time.

At the end of September 1977, a new abortion law was put to the federal vote. The choice was between the existing law, which only allowed abortion in extreme cases—in particular when the mother's life was threatened—and one which allowed abortion during the first three months of pregnancy.

Weight lifted

The previous April I had received a copy of the bulletin of the 'Oui a la vie' ('Yes to life') association. I felt that the arguments it gave against the new proposals were much too weak faced with the magnitude of the problem. They simply attacked the arguments of the other side.

I was furious about this approach to such a serious issue and was all set to write a letter of protest to the president of the association, when God made me bow my head. 'Write to him about your own experience,' He told me. I obeyed immediately but got no reply for several weeks. Then one day the president rang me up, asking if I would be prepared to give this experience in a television programme. I accepted.

These words were like a shaft of sunlight. As we thought about them, the darkness, which seemed to have engulfed us, disappeared. Before the tears were dry, we found ourselves laughing because we had been given the Christ child in our own family.



The Hansford family

We began to realise that Lucy would always be innocent, a gift that so many human beings would pay dearly for. The values she embodied would be a perfect antidote for the ambitious, sex-driven and materialistic society of today. She would, by simply being herself, draw out the unselfishness of everybody she met, not least because of her vulnerability and inefficiency but also because of her affectionate and outgoing nature.

By the time we were allowed to go and see her, we were rejoicing at God's perfect gift to us. As if she realised what we had been through, that tiny little scrap in the big incubator gave us a smile and she has been smiling ever since.

When we thought about the struggle we had been through, we realised that it had been caused by our selfishness—fear of her creating extra work, fear of being unable to cope, fear of the unknown, and fear of being embarrassed because she was different, all

Both sides were represented on the programme. There were 50 people—doctors, lawyers, mothers, unmarried mothers and girls who had had abortions—all for the new proposals; and 50 of us for the old law, doctors, Protestant and Catholic clergy, mothers of large families, and an unmarried mother who had had her first child when she was 13.

As soon as someone put up their hand they were given the floor. During the two hours of debate I never had the feeling that the time had come for me to speak. I felt dreadful as I saw the end of the programme get nearer and nearer... then, terrified, I felt God pushing me to put up my hand. I was able to give my experience and even confront a famous Swiss gynaecologist. At the end of the debate doctors and clergy came to shake my hand, and told me that I had spoken at just the right moment and saved the day. All I could say was that I had spoken when God told me to.

For 25 years I carried the weight of my sin at the bottom of my heart. When I went home that day, having done what the 'inner voice' told me to do, the weight left my heart. I felt that God had forgiven me.

totally selfish feelings and, in the event, totally unfounded.

Lucy has so far created no more work than any normal child and, far from her being hard to cope with, it is a joy to do anything for her as she gives so much in return. As to fear of the unknown, the future is always unknown and we just have to take each day as it comes.

We have come to accept that God knew her every molecule from the moment of conception. He gave her to us to help us feel for all the despised and rejected people on earth, and find an understanding of Christ's love for humanity when He took it upon Himself to be despised and rejected. Christ showed us that if we loved Lucy and all those like her we would, in fact, be loving Him.

Smile

We were appalled when our doctor apologised for not giving the tests that would have revealed Lucy's mongolism. Had he done so he would have recommended an abortion. We had come to recognise Lucy as God's perfect gift to us.

Through all this, God has given us a determination to fight for a completely new understanding of the priceless value of life. As a result we have taken on the battle to re-establish the Hippocratic oath which specifically binds a doctor not to aid in procuring abortions. We have sent a copy of this, with an account of our own experiences, to every MP prior to the abortion bill amendment debate. So far we have had 80 personal replies.

Perhaps the value of this little person has been best expressed by Ann when she said, 'Of all the things I have ever had, toys or books or sweets, the thing I love best is a smile from Lucy.'

MARY CRAIG's *Blessings* is the harrowing, and totally compelling, account of her own family and life.

When her second son, Paul, was born, he seemed normal, except for his 'sagging pockets of flesh'. It was not until Paul was nearly two that the full truth struck home: he suffered from Hohler's Syndrome, or gargoylism—a rare and extreme form of physical and mental deformity.

The next four years were close on hell for Mary Craig as she struggled to bring up a totally incontinent child who was incapable of showing any recognition of his parents. Public humiliations were heaped on private anguish as she fought to contain her bitterness and self-pity. The best of medical science—which took mother and son to Belgium and Poland—could not help. Nor could Lourdes, though she writes, 'There is in fact no better cure for self-pity than Lourdes.'

Eventually, while on holiday, she found herself alone in a church: 'Maybe I'd gone there to give the Almighty a last chance. Or maybe I'd gone there for a good howl in private... I didn't howl, but muttered a defiant if muddled, "Damn you, you don't exist, but I hate you." Then I burst into tears, and threw decorum to the winds. "All right," I heard myself shouting, "if you do exist, show me a way out. For a start, what the hell am I to do next?"'

That same evening she picked up a book which had a single reference to the Sue

BOOK REVIEW

From hell to Christmas



Mary Craig

Ryder Home for concentration camp survivors in Suffolk. 'As I stood looking down at it, I realised that one part of my prayer in the church had been answered. I was going to Suffolk.'

So began Mary Craig's friendship with Baroness Ryder and their work together for the survivors of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck, whose normal lives had been destroyed by torture and 'medical' experiments. The book becomes as much the story of these heroic men and women as of the Craigs.

It was through this work that Mary Craig began to understand the meaning of Paul's short life: 'If our value as human beings lies in what we do for each other, Paul had done a very great deal: he had, at the very least, opened the eyes of his mother to the suffering that was in the world, and had brought her to understand something of the redemptive force it was capable of generating. I had

been broken, but I had been put together again...'

Further seeming tragedy struck Frank and Mary Craig with the birth of their fourth son, Nicholas. He was mongoloid. Again they were thrown into the pit of despair: 'It was when I had given up hope of ever reaching the bottom that some words I had once read flashed into my mind with a brilliant clarity: "Our tragedy is not that we suffer, but that we waste suffering. We waste the opportunity of growing into compassion." The words leaped out at me, acting like a brake on my despair, dramatically halting my slide into madness.' She also read in a French poem: 'Do you imagine that it is in a fit of absent-mindedness that God has afflicted you? We have so much to learn, and grief must be our master. It is only through suffering that we can hope to come to self-knowledge.'

As it turned out, Nicholas, despite his disability, became a source of endless joy to the family, 'a year-round Christmas gift' as a friend described him.

Blessings explodes the myth that our aim in life must be to avoid suffering at all costs. Little wonder that the novelist Morris West describes it as, 'A record of courage, compassion and personal growth through the experience of almost intolerable tragedy. The most moving book I have read in years.'

Michael Smith

Blessings by Mary Craig, Coronet Books/Hodder and Stoughton, price 85p paperback.

IRELAND—THE HISTORY WE IGNORE

A recent sermon in Westminster Abbey by CANON JOHN AUSTIN BAKER has stirred comment in Britain and Ireland. In it Canon Baker, who is Sub-Dean of Westminster, spoke of what Britain needs to do if she is to play a part in answering the tragedy in Northern Ireland.

We print here an extract from the sermon:

THE LIFE-BLOOD of the Irish is their history. This is true of North and South, Catholic and Protestant alike. They are proud of it and will not disown it, even if some want to break from some of its legacies.

And they have reason to be proud. Ireland was one of the sanctuaries of art and learning in Europe's Dark Ages. For 1400 years the Irish have been prodigal in giving their sons and daughters for the Church's mission all over the world. In modern times Ireland's contribution to culture has been out of all proportion to her numbers.

But we, the British, are part of that history, and no good part of it. From the twelfth century to the early twentieth most of what we did in Ireland added, either by oppression or misjudgement, to her sorrows. The real miracle of modern Ireland is that the vast majority of Irish people are so ready to forgive and forget, and to treat individual British as friends.

The first thing is to put right our relationship with the Irish people and nation. We are still dominated by a patronising, indeed insulting, 19th Century caricature of the Irish. We are most of us grossly ignorant of the facts of Irish history and of our own

record in that country.

In Christian terms the first indispensable step to real progress in Ireland is penitence; an acknowledgement by us of our faults and failures in the past, of our sins toward Ireland. Following naturally from that, the second step is that we should admit our need of the wisdom and generosity of the Irish Republic to advise and help us in dealing with this tragic deadlock. Both these things could be done. A major speech by our Prime Minister would be a suitable medium; and I like to think that our present Prime Minister could do it well.

David and Goliath

We need to say to Dublin, 'Look, we are out of our depth,' to ask their co-operation not just in our measures, but in framing a common policy as genuinely equal partners, equally and inescapably committed to finding the best answer for all the inhabitants of Ireland, North and South. What need is there to call in the United Nations or the Mayor of New York when the people who understand the issues more deeply than anyone else are there, across the water,

perfectly willing to help?

One gesture which would do more than any other to encourage that help would be this: if we would recognise publicly and officially the simple fact that the commitment to ultimate Irish unity in the Republic's constitution has nothing whatever in common with the IRA's methods or its goal, which is that of a Marxist one-party state. The Irish do not want to coerce Protestant Ulster or violate human rights. By treating their natural long-term vision and hope as identical with the aims of the terrorists we foolishly give unwarranted and disastrous aid and comfort to the men of violence.

There is a Jewish story that the angels asked God, 'What will you do when David and Goliath come to you accusing each other?' God replied, 'It will be for me to try to make them friends.' If there is to be any worthwhile future for our Protestant friends and fellow-citizens in Ulster someone must try to make them friends with the Catholics both north and south of the border. We can play no part in that unless we by penitence, humility and love begin to heal the wounds of history and become better friends with our Irish neighbours.



J. Azopardi

Many years in TV and radio have taught Harry and Beatrice Howlett one thing:

CYNICISM IS DEATH

As well as organising the women's groups, Beatrice had begun to write TV scripts herself. Staying with them in their home at this time was a young man who, they later discovered, was wanted by the police for a string of crimes. She vividly recalls the look of fascination on the man's face as they sat listening to a crime story on the radio. 'Does what I write influence people?' she began to ask herself. It was a question that she had never seriously considered before.

The company with which Harry worked grew until it was producing TV programmes that were shown across Australia, with weekly audiences in the millions.

After 20 years with the company, it was strongly suggested to Harry that he should retire. 'Deep down I felt people wanted to get rid of me,' he says. Furious, he resigned, and swore to get even with the group who had been responsible for forcing him to leave the company. 'I did so,' he says, 'and, God forgive me, I enjoyed it.'

Then followed two years of frustration. One morning Beatrice suggested that they should go to an MRA conference in New Zealand. To her amazement Harry agreed.

Harry dabbled with the concept he learnt there, of taking time in quiet to find God's leading, 'but I didn't have much faith in it.'

Bought on phone

But some weeks later, when they were staying by Lake Rotorua, Harry had the thought that if he would write and apologise to the seven men concerned, he would find something much better in life. 'My first reaction was, "Like hell I will",' he says. 'But God kept niggling me. So finally I sat down and wrote seven simple letters. I went to the postbox with them and then the miracle happened. The moment they were inside that box, my bitterness went. I thought to myself, "Good God, this really does work".'

At almost the same time as this, a friend in London was writing him, inviting him to act in the MRA play *Through the Garden Wall* at the Westminster Theatre. Amazed by the coincidence, he accepted. His dream of the West End stage was coming true—but not as he had envisaged it.

'Then in Europe, God started the niggling again. I felt Him asking me to give up smoking. I remember walking along a path saying, "Lord, knock it off. You're always wanting me to give up something. Anyway, I've tried many times and I can't stop.'

Beatrice wanted him to stop. 'I got so angry with him,' she says. 'But I knew this was wrong. I asked God to help me to change. He took the anger away.'

Just a few days later Harry woke with the



thought, 'Today is the day'. From that moment he has never wanted a cigarette.

They began to feel that they had something to give, from their experience, to men and women involved in the media.

'It's a field in which you so easily get cynical,' says Harry. 'But cynicism is death. It is the opposite of love and life. When you begin to find God's plan for your life, it affects your whole thinking. I long for the media to help to build a world where every man can be truly free.'

What do you do about an idea like that? A further thought, a yet more impossible task, clarified it: 'Don't think just of your local media. Take on the world.'

London, Harry felt, was the nerve centre of world media. So to London they have come, in spite of their accountant's suggestions that they were mad, and equally bemused comments from friends in television. Beatrice was scared of trudging the streets in a London winter, house-hunting. But a suitable flat materialised just before they came—and they bought it on the telephone.

'These have been the most exciting years of our life,' says Harry. The combination of his bluntness and Beatrice's quiet concern seem to penetrate the shields of British reserve, and many people in theatre and television have found a new perspective on life through their friendship with them. 'God said to me, "You live so I can work through you",' Harry says. 'If I want nothing for myself, He can work.'

But just when he was getting dug in in London, he was asked to take on the directing of a play, *The man they could not buy*, about the Christian socialist pioneer, Keir Hardie. Much to his annoyance at first, Harry found himself travelling all over the country with the play. 'This is ridiculous,' he thought, hankering to get back to London.

Then he realised that in each place they met people in the media, younger people who would be the decision-makers of the years ahead. Many were interested in the ideas of the play, and helped greatly with it.

'I realised then that though God had given me a vision, I had seen only myself at the centre of its fulfilment. Now I see that it did not matter who God used as his channel, and it might not be me.'

'But whoever joins us or doesn't, we want so to live that people in the media catch a vision of the task God has for each of them.'

John and Nada Bond

WHEN AN AUSTRALIAN couple from sunny Sydney sell their home and come to live in a London flat, it is worth asking why. The intrepid interviewer who asks this of Harry and Beatrice Howlett quickly realises that, like the visible tip of the iceberg, there is a gigantic story hidden under that decision.

Harry is a cheery cuss with a craggy face and a twinkling eye, ready to give his opinions forcibly on almost any subject. Beatrice, originally from New Zealand, is quieter—a rock in a turbulent sea. And it has been turbulent—ever since they met as actors struggling to establish themselves on the Australian stage. Their eyes were on Broadway and London's West End, but the outbreak of war in 1939 thwarted this ambition.

Harry served with the New Zealand armed forces and after the war returned to Australia with Beatrice and two little Howletts. He took up work in radio acting, wrote scripts for commercial radio—and started drinking heavily.

After a time they got fed up and went market gardening. But it didn't pay, and they were soon back in radio work. Meanwhile Harry's drinking got worse. He was rapidly becoming an alcoholic when Beatrice gave him a choice—his drink or his marriage.

Angrily he strode out of the house, looked up to heaven—he vividly remembers the clouds dancing round the moon—and said, 'OK—You save my marriage and I'll do what You say,' then fell into a drunken sleep.

From that time he found the strength to say 'no' and he gave up drink—much to his own and his friends' surprise. Their marriage was saved.

The experience of God's power started something new. Beatrice began to pray for a love for her husband. By this time he had joined a TV production company. It was just starting—Harry had to paint the single-room office before he could begin work.

One day Beatrice had the idea that she should form a women's organisation to back up the work Harry was doing. Though she heartily disliked organising, she set to work. Soon women's groups were meeting in several cities to work out what kind of programmes people wanted. 'This was the beginning of something new between us,' she says. 'The other day, in Wales, a man said to me, "I see you really love your husband." All I could say was that God gives love, and anything that man could see was a gift from God.'

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