



President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems
in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research

Suite 555, 2000 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006 (202) 653-8051

June 3, 1982

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
United States House of
Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hyde:

Thank you for your letter of May 18, 1982, and for a copy of your February 9, 1982 letter to the President and Secretary Schweiker.

I can well understand your concern with the phrase from our staff background paper to which you refer in your letter. Let me assure you that no insinuation should be taken from this phrase that the Commission does not believe, as you put it, that "at least the fact of birth would entitle one to be considered a member of the human family." When a commission undertakes the sort of basic inquiry in which we are engaged, it is necessary for us to go back to fundamental propositions and to examine each one, even ones which seem self-evident. As a fellow lawyer I am sure you are familiar with statements which are made arguendo. Such propositions are tested out merely as a way of refuting them.

I can assure you that no undue emphasis was given to any one viewpoint on the issues raised in neonatal intensive care during our hearing on January 9, 1982. I believe it would be a mistake to regard the Commission's discussions as emphasizing an "inhumane" or "utilitarian" perspective. As with all our subjects, we attempt as best we are able to take account of all reasonable views.

You might be interested to know, for example, that the Commission staff had already sent to the Commissioners the Washington Post column by George Will that you sent to us on the Infant Doe case in Bloomington. I agree with you that it is a fine article.

We very much appreciate your continued interest in the work of the Commission and will look forward to any comments which Dr. Koop is able provide.

Respectfully yours,

Morris B. Abram
Chairman

cc: Secretary Schweiker
Dr. C. Everett Koop

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