

NIH OKAYS EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

In December, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) cleared the way for federally funded embryonic stem-cell research. We unleashed as soon as we caught wind of this development.

When Barack Obama was in the Illinois State Senate, he fought passionately to deny little babies born alive as a result of a botched abortion the medical care they needed to survive. It was not surprising, then, that it took this ethically challenged man only seven weeks to overturn President Bush's executive order limiting government money to research on existing embryonic stem-cell lines. Now the NIH have decided which new lines are "appropriate," leading those scientists who will get rich from this disturbing decision to jump for joy.

It is true that all the stem-cell lines that were approved involve embryos left over from fertility clinics. But it won't stop there, and that is because those with the muscle to do something about this issue—beginning with the president—are essentially utilitarians who lack a principled ethical base.

Dr. Bernadine Healy, a former director of the NIH, recently said that embryonic stem-cell research was basically "obsolete." That's because, in part, there are ways in which scientists can approximate this research by using ethically neutral adult stem cells. But this isn't good enough for those scientists who are salivating over the thought of getting their hands on the stimulus package loot. Dr. Francis Collins, the director of NIH, said it well when he offered the following Pavlovian response: "People are champing at the bit for the opportunity to get started."

To those who say it doesn't matter, remember this: every one

of us started as an embryo, and it is impossible to do this kind of research without killing nascent human life. One more thing that should give pause: Germany has the strictest bioethical guidelines in Europe. They know what happens when human rights are treated cavalierly.