

STEM CELL ISSUE REACHES A HOT POINT

The day before former President Ronald Reagan died, 58 senators sent a letter to President George W. Bush urging him to permit embryonic stem cell research. The senators were now insisting that with the death of President Reagan, the issue took on greater urgency. They cited the support that Nancy Reagan has shown for this type of research.

The Catholic League cautioned against any change in the current rules even as the issue reaches a hot point. The following is the text of our remarks as sent to the media:

“Senator Orrin Hatch, an advocate of embryonic stem cell research, has said of Nancy Reagan’s support for this procedure, ‘I believe that it’s going to be pretty tough for anybody not to have empathy for her feelings on this issue.’ That’s true enough, but it doesn’t settle the issue: what ultimately matters is whether embryonic stem cell research is the intentional destruction of human life. Since every person ever born began as an embryo, and since embryonic stem cell research is predicated on the acknowledgement that embryos are human (otherwise the research would be meaningless), it is incumbent that our society not sanction it.

“The same day the 58 senators sent their letter to President Bush, Pope John Paul II admonished Americans to reject such things as abortion, same sex unions, pornography and prostitution as ‘self-centered demands’; he could easily have chosen to add embryonic stem cell research to this list. The pope, who suffers from Parkinson’s Disease, might arguably have benefited from embryonic stem cell research had it been previously allowed. But the Holy Father recognizes, as all of us should, that it is immoral for one person to have his life extended at the expense of someone else’s right to life.

“One of the senators who signed the letter to President Bush is John Kerry, a man who calls himself a ‘practicing and believing Catholic.’ Given the fact that he supports partial-birth abortion and embryonic stem cell research, it would be instructive to know when Senator Kerry believes human life begins.”