

# OPPOSE 'ABORTION ON DEMAND BILL'

By Stephen Green

A bill to decriminalise abortion is being brought before Parliament by Diana Johnson. Her Abortion (Decriminalisation): Ten Minute Rule Bill will have its first reading on 13th March. It calls for abortion to be decriminalised without any restrictions. This would allow abortion up to birth, on demand, for any reason at all.

## LAW AGAINST ABORTION

The actual law against abortion is contained in the Offences Against the Person Act 1861:

S 58 Administering drugs or using instruments to procure abortion.

'Every woman, being with child, who, with intent to procure her own miscarriage, shall unlawfully administer to herself any poison or other noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use any instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent, and whosoever, with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman, whether she be or be not with child, shall unlawfully administer to her or cause to be taken by her any poison or other noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use any instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent, shall be guilty of felony, and being convicted thereof shall be liable . . . to be kept in penal servitude for life . . .'

S 59 (Procuring drugs, &c. to cause abortion) Outlaws the supply or procurement of such a 'poison or other noxious thing, or any instrument or thing whatsoever'.

## ABORTION ACT

The Abortion Act 1967 is 'permissive legislation' in the sense that it permits something in certain circumstances which would otherwise be criminal. It opens: 'Subject to the provisions of this section, a person shall not be guilty of an offence under the law relating to abortion when a pregnancy is terminated by a registered medical practitioner if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith ...'

It then goes on to say the pregnancy must not have 'exceeded its twenty-fourth week', an amendment made by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 S37.

But clearly, if the 'law relating to abortion' in the 1861 Act is scrapped, the whole of the Abortion Act 1967 ceases to apply.

## MISLEADING MPS

So when Diana Johnson says her bill will only allow abortion up to 24 weeks, she is misleading MPs and the public. It would allow it up to birth. Behind the bill is 'Abortion Rights', the 'national pro-choice campaign' and 'We Trust Women', a British Pregnancy Advisory Service offshoot. Chief Executive of BPAS, Ann Furedi, said at the launch of that campaign: 'there should be no legal upper limit, that is



Diana Johnson MP

what taking it out of the criminal law means.'

Since last year, the Royal College of Midwives has also supported the decriminalisation of abortion up until birth for any reason. Director of Services to Members at the RCM, Dr Suzanne Tyler, said on Good Morning Britain: 'In theory the decriminalisation does mean that there are no abortion limits'.

Over 1000 midwives have signed an open letter asking for the RCM position to decriminalise abortion to be revoked.

A midwife from Liverpool, Liz Cragen, said about this Bill, 'Midwives will leave. Parliament better realise the consequences of their actions if they vote for this Bill. There is already a shortage of midwives, they won't want to see that shortage increase.'

## OUT OF STEP

Abortion Rights describes the 1861 Act as: 'legislation this old, ... this out-of-step with clinical developments and the moral thinking of the modern world'.

Actually, it is out-of-step, but not in the way they mean. The science of embryology, ultra-sound, modern imaging, taken with advances in what we know of foetal development now leave no possibility of denying the humanity and the sentient nature of a child in the womb.

In 2013, North Dakota passed a 'fetal heartbeat bill' that made abortions illegal if an embryonic heartbeat was detectable, on average around six weeks into a pregnancy. This requirement would have ended abortion in the state because the heartbeat is typically detectable before a woman who is not monitoring for a pregnancy learns she is pregnant.

The North Dakota law met with an immediate block at the district court level, upheld by a federal court of appeals. Ohio legislators also passed a "heartbeat bill" at the end of December, but it was vetoed by Republican Governor John Kasich. But the ability to detect a foetal heartbeat at six weeks of gestation is an indication of how fast medicine is moving and how little time the abortionists have left.

**READ:** Gen 4:10; Deut 27:25; Ps 15:5; Prov 6:16-19; Jer 2:34,19:4,32:35; Matt 27:24.

**PRAY:** That there will be an outcry against the Diana Johnson Bill and MPs will vote it down.

**WRITE:** To your MP at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA asking him/her to oppose the bill with your reasons. A bill has many stages so you can write to your MP even after 13th March. But if you can get online, it would be good to email your MP this weekend at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>