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March 4, 2004

Canadians looking to Ottawa for renewed integrity and democratic accountability have been dealt another blow. The Senate committee examining a controversial government bill on reproductive technologies has arbitrarily shut out one side of the debate.

The Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology refused to hear from the two main groups who oppose Bill C-6 because it would allow human embryos to be killed as part of stem cell medical research. The two national pro-life groups are LifeCanada and Campaign Life Coalition. "The Senate committee has utterly failed in its essential democratic role, which is to properly vet legislation before sending it for final reading," said Jakki Jeffs, president of LifeCanada. "There is no integrity when a bill is railroaded like this and passed, just to get it out of the way before an election."

A previous form of the bill, C-13, passed the House of Common last Fall by a vote of 149-109 after a lengthy debate.

"To use any human beings, including the very youngest, as so much raw material for research is to cross a Rubicon into an inhuman world - cloning and beyond," added Jakki Jeffs of LifeCanada. While the bill includes a ban on cloning, the provisions on embryonic research create a slippery slope that will eventually lead to the cloning of embryos, as carried out recently by South Korean scientists.

"Ethics should guide science," said Mrs. Jeffs. "With this bill, science is driving ethics. The Senate Committee has not served the public interest."

In turning a deaf ear to the two pro-life groups, the Senate committee has also disregarded the values of most Canadians. A Leger poll last Fall showed 70% either have reservations about stem cell research that destroys embryos or oppose it outright. Only 21% expressed unqualified support.

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