

Letters

Historical perspective

Over the past week several people have written letters about how outraged they are over the anti-abortion demonstrations that took place outside several local high schools in Peterborough. Several others were interviewed by the press and some of them also expressed grave concerns. I was not one of the demonstrators.

I am confused by the language of those who complain about the demonstrations. Several have said things like "gruesome pictures of dead babies" and that such pictures should not be legal. Sort of "Children should not see blood", especially not dead "babies" (their word not mine). What are they saying? We kill babies but we should not look at this? Are you kidding me? It is fine to kill babies, the real problem is showing pictures of the deed? Especially not to the group most likely to be involved in the activity? What, the demonstrators should be outside the lawn-bowler's club?

The real problem with the

signs is that they remind us that an abortion is a dead baby and that is almost impossible to depersonalize when actually seen. "Out of sight, out of mind" is much easier. It seems to me that to grant the fetus any shade of humanity (a baby) opens up a Pandora's Box of doubt. And that is what the demonstrators did, they dared to raise the issue of the humanity of the fetus.

Some have also said that they cannot understand how this could be compared to Hitler's Holocaust. As a student of history, I believe I cannot only make that case but add another.

In 1852 the vast majority of white folks in the American south thought that Ms. Harriet Beecher Stowe should have been publicly whipped for her daring to portray black slaves as "people" in her novel Uncle Tom's Cabin. Southerners knew that slaves were not people but rather "property" just like any cow or pig. That is why they were not allowed to testify in court; they were

not people. The Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court said, "A black man has no rights any white man is obliged to respect." So the south got real angry because it was none of anyone's business what they did with their own "property". The owners alone decided and no counter views should have been allowed.

Today, only the mother decides if the fetus is a "baby" or her "property". Please, no pictures should be allowed.

The same argument carried the day in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Jews were not people, they were "sub-humans". Pictures of their treatment were not legal. Many Germans, not to mention Canadians might have had doubts about their beliefs had the Jews been seen as humans. And that, of course, is why we never did get to see those "tasteless" pictures until after the war. So "upsetting" they would have been for our children and for ourselves.

When I was a history teacher I was sometimes asked by students how it is that we humans can do such terrible things to our fellow humans. My only answer was that we first take away our humanity, then we are free to do what is in our self-interest - even tasteless things.

EAMON ANDERSON
Monaghan Road

MAY 26th
Pctb
EXAMINER