

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Friday 9 November 2015**

### **PARLIAMENT IS BEING DUPED INTO ACCEPTING GM BABIES**

The Department of Health is resorting to disgraceful tactics in order to lure Parliament into taking the momentous decision to permit the genetic modification (GM) of human babies.

In the first place, it is saying that what the proposed technology will involve, namely, the replacing of mitochondrial genes of an initial human cell with the genes of another human cell will not be genetic modification (GM) at all. It will be 'mitochondrial *donation*' – so we need not be worried!

This clever euphemism (or should we say 'sophistry'?) has been devised by the Department and the Chief Medical Officer – with, they say, the support of outside bodies like the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (though this is disputed). Clearly nervous that the real experts will laugh at it they are calling it a 'working definition' only.

The new regulations which would allow 'mitochondrial donation' were laid before Parliament on 17 December last, just as MPs were preparing to take off for the Christmas break. The Department has since stated categorically that the regulations will be debated 'by the whole House' and voted on by MPs. But this does not mean 'on the floor of the House, i.e. in a full debate in the Commons itself. It is now clear that the regulations will be sent to the Delegated Legislative Committee, a body which votes on lesser parliamentary business, and be quickly passed into law in a back room without most MPs even noticing, let alone voting.

It is disgraceful that so important a measure should be smuggled through Parliament like this. If the Department had asked for a debate on the floor of the House – i.e. a proper debate and vote – it would surely have got one. That is what the subject deserved.

Make no mistake. Mitochondrial donation is genetic modification. It is re-structuring the basic 'materials' of a human life. It is manufacturing GM babies. It is a form of cloning. It will produce human beings with three parents – via in vitro fertilisation.

The technique has been little tested and could be very dangerous. The drugs used in replacing one set of genes with another could have serious side-effects. Yes, in every human cell there are a hundred more genes in the nucleus than in the mitochondria – but the latter's cells have crucial role in the make-up of every human being and replacing them with 'alien' cells could produce two incompatible genomes – the nuclear and the mitochondrial.

The enthusiasts for GM babies say it will enable us to overcome the rare but serious mitochondria-borne diseases like cystic fibrosis. Of course we all want to conquer them. But GM will not. It will prevent human beings with those defects from coming into existence. It will not be a cure. It will be a disincentive to finding one. It will not be good medicine.

On the contrary, all this could result in the creation of new congenital diseases. GM experiments on animals have had some horrific results. No wonder the US Food and Drug Administration has recommended extreme caution. Most countries are holding back. Britain is rushing in irresponsibly.

And if we allow it for this we will soon be allowing it for other 'good' reasons. It's a slippery slope: a very dangerous one.

Genetic modification is fundamentally incompatible with human dignity and the respect that a civilised society should show to human life at all its stages. It is unworthy of a truly civilised society.

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**LIFE is a pro-life charity that supports anyone facing a crisis pregnancy, pregnancy loss or after an abortion, and strives to engage, inspire and inform the next generation.**