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Editorial

Right To Life vs. Upjohn

Mr. W. N. Hubbard, Jr., President of the Upjohn Company, is quoted as follows in the December, 1972 issue of *The Journal of Reproductive Medicine*:

"We are confronted with the problem of discrepancy between total productivity of the human race as it is now organized and its consumptive demands. This discrepancy has led to a threatening difference between the "have's" and "have-not's." If we are to have each human life fulfill its potential, then we will have to reduce this discrepancy between productivity and consumptive demand. With limited resources in an ecology that is subject to harmful alteration, there is some doubt about the strategy of only increasing production. Therefore, for the first time, the medical profession is involved in the inhibition of life and here we look to the most effective and convenient means. Considering the pathology of population concentration and the futility of trying to keep up with an explosive birth rate by increasing productivity alone, the need for limitation of new human life becomes persuasive."

In order to appreciate fully the insidious significance of the previous statement, it is important for both physicians and officials of the pharmaceutical industry to understand what is behind the current widespread boycott of Upjohn products, which is occurring in Catholic hospitals all across the United States. The response on the part of the Upjohn Company officials to resolutions from numerous Boards of Trustees has betrayed an unfortunate propensity to define improperly the issues at hand.

First of all, the Catholic medical community fully comprehends the significance and importance of research in prostaglandins. It is somewhat patronizing to be reminded that prostaglandins do have other therapeutic potential, even if Prostaglandin F₂ Alpha is currently approved by the Food and Drug Administration solely for the indication of intra-amniotic injection to induce abortion in the second trimester. The therapeutic versatility of prostaglandins is no more relevant to the issue at hand than would a statement that table salt also has uses beyond saline amniocentesis.

Likewise, the statement by the Upjohn public relations department that the company "takes no position" on abortion entirely begs the question. The promotion of an abortifacient drug is not a "non-

position" even if the drug is less risky to use than hysterotomy and salting out. The maternal risks of second trimester abortion are important, but the uniform fetal mortality of second trimester abortions remains unchanged with intra-amniotic prostaglandin installation and the deplorable occurrence of previable live births is actually increased. The only way to eliminate "avoidable risks" to the mother and the unborn child is to ban this barbaric procedure altogether.

Nevertheless, we cannot insist that every corporate official subscribe to the tenets of the Right to Life Movement. What we cannot accept, however, is the fact that the chief corporate officer of a major pharmaceutical company has publicly announced that the company will divert part of its research and development effort, however large or small, into finding "the most effective and convenient means" of killing. Mr. Hubbard blandly accepts the propriety of the medical profession's involvement in "the inhibition of life." His viewpoint may not be unique, but it is certainly the first public statement of its type and, as such, it must call forth the most vigorous protest from all who deplore the current anti-life trend in our society. Mr. Hubbard borrows from the Apocalyptic Demographers in suggesting a present population crisis demanding lethal solutions. His viewpoint would not be supported by anything resembling a scientific consensus, especially in this country now experiencing the lowest birth rate in its history and a growth rate *less than* zero population growth. Putting aside the merits of Mr. Hubbard's population theories, however, one cannot avoid a feeling of affront at hearing life-inhibition promoted as a strategy by a leading spokesman for one of the *life sciences*. Those of us in the medical profession have every reason to expect that the pharmaceutical industry will stand with us in a united front against any encroachment on the inviolability of human life notwithstanding any alleged societal benefits to be derived from such an encroachment.

Until such time as the Upjohn Company publicly reasserts its regard for the sanctity of life at all stages of life's continuum, every physician is urged to form a right conscience and make an informed judgement regarding the dispensing of any Upjohn product, either in his private practice or his hospital affiliations, particularly whenever a generically equivalent product is available.

— E. F. D.