

In The Name Of Humanity

Abortion Is A 'Choice' Of No Less Than Murder, Say Pro-Life Advocates

By LAURIE SLOTHOWER
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FOR DR. WILLIAM Levonian, Edith Manchester and the untold numbers who share their beliefs — the issue is clear.

Abortion is killing. Murder — plain, simple, and premeditated.

It is murder perhaps even more heinous than that of your run-of-the-mill street crime, because it is sanctioned by the government and its victims are babies.

And it's all so unnecessary, they feel, given modern birth control technology and the numbers of infertile couples willing to adopt unwanted infants.

It is, they believe, THE moral issue of our era.

These two persons — among the most-heard voices opposing abortion in Santa Cruz County — were interviewed as part of a series of articles on the issue.

Manchester is the most politically active. She is director of Choice for Life, an anti-abortion group seeking legislation to override the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision denying the government the right to ban abortion.

The local group will soon be affiliating with one of the national pro-life groups, Manchester says. (Groups who oppose abortion term themselves "pro-life;" those who favor the option of legal abortions call themselves "pro-choice.")

Levonian is a family physician and an anesthesiologist at Community Hospital. His letters to the editor appear regularly in the Sentinel.

Also participating in the discussion was Jane Hancock, a volunteer at Birthright, a nonsectarian, nonprofit service organization which gives aid to pregnant women. Hancock says Birthright is not a political organization.

All three believe human life begins at conception and they oppose abortions in all cases, except for when the life of the mother is endangered.

Levonian makes it known at the outset that he is not a member of any fundamentalist group, but that he opposes abortion from a medical point of view.

"The issue is: we're talking about a human being. Is it right to kill a human being?" Levonian asks rhetorically.

It is never right to kill, says

Levonian, but in the case of a citizen shooting an intruder, a country at war or when a society puts a convicted murderer to death. At least these deeds can be rationally justified, according to Levonian.

But it is not justified to put to death an unborn child because it's not wanted or it's not considered "good enough" to live, he says.

The notion that a specific segment of society — i.e., human fetuses — should be put to death because the government says it's okay is the type of thinking which allowed the Nazi Holocaust to occur, says Levonian.

Levonian believes, as do Manchester and Hancock, that life begins at the moment of conception.

"It is incontrovertible," he states. "It's chromosomal makeup is and it is living. There is no one in the scientific world who will deny that you have a living human being at the time of conception."

Manchester believes people who favor abortion have not thought through its moral implications.

"Abortion is a death statement. It is saying that killing is the answer," says Manchester, a mother of 12 who does volunteer work with severely handicapped children.

The creative, life-affirming answer to unwanted pregnancies "is to turn your difficulties around into something positive," she says.

Manchester believes abortion leaves its scar on women. "They never expect the guilt when they realize they have killed their own baby."

Medical problems include the risk of sterilization and the higher risk of having premature babies in subsequent pregnancies, according to Manchester.

Manchester also believes the rationality behind granting abortions makes euthanasia and killing handicapped or retarded babies acceptable.

Manchester does not believe an abortion should be performed even in cases of rape or incest.

While acknowledging the tragedy of a woman made pregnant in such instances, she notes, "I believe human life is so valuable it needs to be preserved."

"We can help such women and offer aid to see them through a very difficult time."

Levonian believes abortion should only be performed to save the life of the mother.

"Even then, it's not right, but you have to make a decision which life takes precedence," says Levonian.

In his numerous years of medical practice, however, he has seen only two cases where such an operation was necessary,

Both point out that very few of the estimated million and a half abortions performed every year are the result of rape, incest, or even failed contraceptives.

"A properly taken contraceptive is going to fail a small percentage of the time. But this argument is a smokescreen to bring in a huge number of abortions," claims Levonian.

He cites studies in Princeton, Los Angeles and Hawaii which show that the overwhelming number of abortions are performed on women who have not used any kind of contraceptives. "When abortion is available, it is used as the primary means of birth control," states Levonian.

As for arguments that unwanted babies grow up to be physically abused, he cites a Los Angeles study which found that 90 percent of abused children in the study were from "wanted" pregnancies.

And another study found that women who have had abortion are more likely to abuse their children.

"And why not, if you think the child is a worthless commodity anyway," Levonian says.

Abortion, says Manchester, is the most important issue facing society today, "because if human life is not valued in a society, then there's nothing worth valuing. The mark of how civilized a society is, is how it values human life."

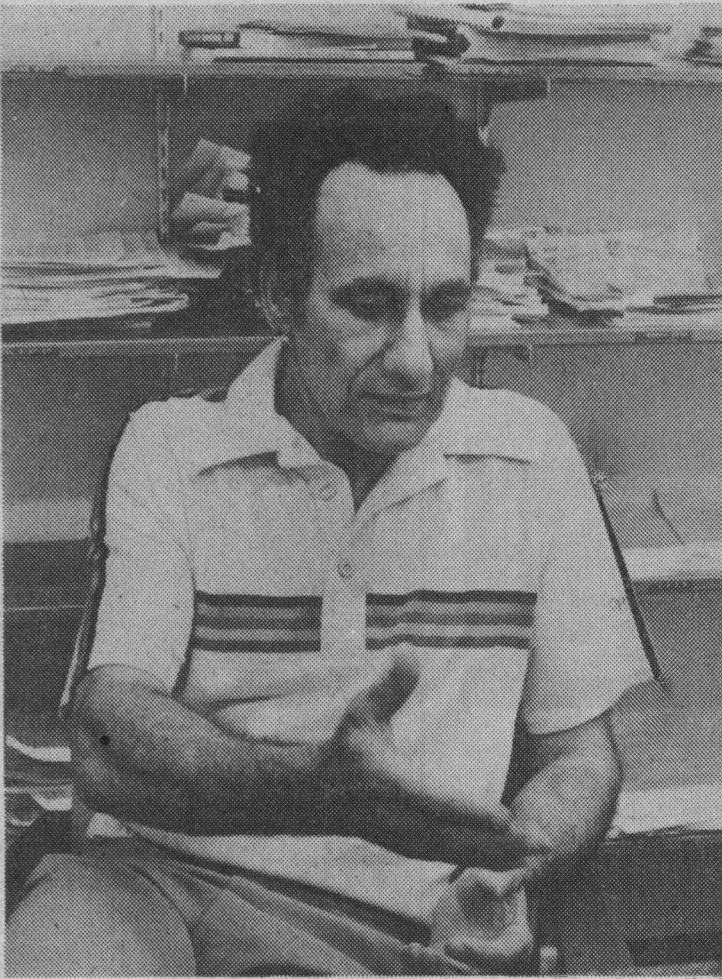
Both Levonian and Manchester believe in the rightness of the death penalty.

"It may be that a life is such a threat to society that it may be necessary to take this life, if but that's after due process," says Manchester.

An unborn child is not a criminal and it deserves the right to live, she said.

Taking the life of a murderer is still not right, but it is at least justifiable, adds Levonian.

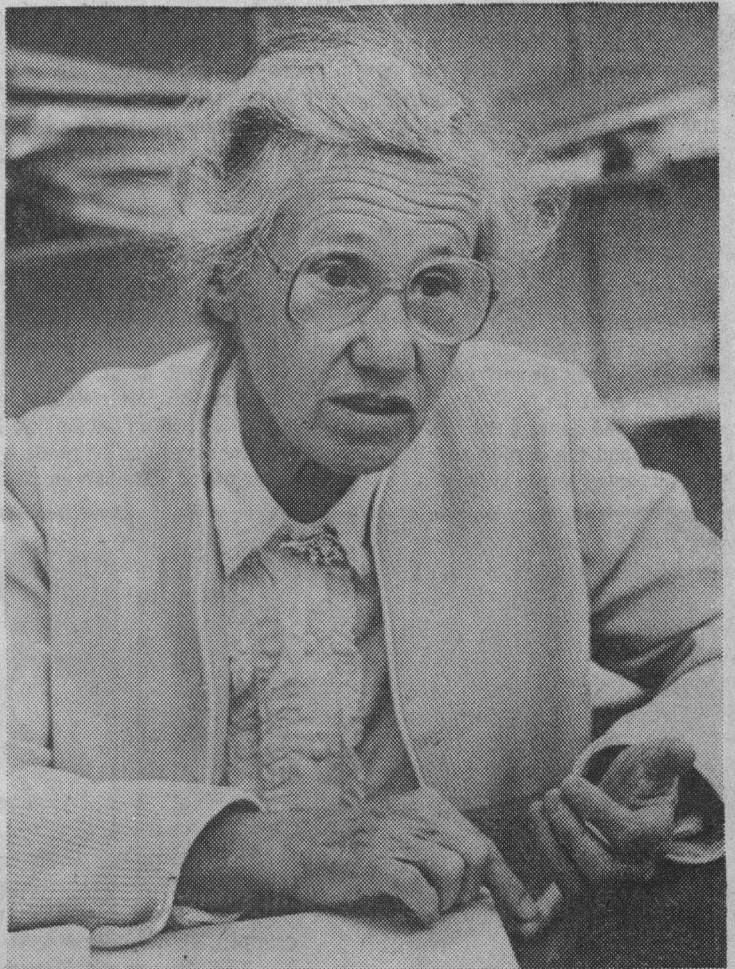
Hancock believes it is impossible to draw a line separating a fetus from a baby. Even a few weeks after conception, the unborn entity has its own fingerprints and most of its internal organs are formed.



Pete Amos/Sentinel

The argument that abortion is necessary because contraceptives fail is a smokescreen, according to Dr. William Levonian. "When abortion is available, it is used as the primary means of birth control."

Edith Manchester of Choice for Life does not believe in abortion even in cases of rape or incest. "Human life is so valuable it needs to be preserved," says the mother of 12.



New studies in recent years have uncovered evidence that the unborn child is a feeling, remembering, aware human being, capable of consciousness, Hancock says, quoting passages from the book THE SECRET

LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD
by Dr. Thomas Verny.

Abortion, like the recent case in Indiana where a child with Down's Syndrome was refused medical aid by its parents, leads to

a particular type of thinking in society

Says Hancock: "We are judging who is normal enough to participate in society.

"I don't think there is such a standard."