

The Center For Bio-Ethical Reform

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

On Monday, June 25, 2001, the Los Angeles-based Center For Bio-Ethical Reform (CBR) will launch its anti-abortion, Reproductive Choice Campaign (RCC). The project will involve the operation of a fleet of large, box-body trucks on whose sides will be displayed bill-board size, color photos depicting aborted human embryos and early fetuses. Several of these trucks can be viewed on the CBR Website at www.abortionNO.org. Initially, the trucks will be operated every business day on the freeway system in Southern California. Routes will thereafter be added in Northern and Central California at times as yet to be determined. A nation-wide expansion will be undertaken before the end of the year. This is a long-term project which will continue indefinitely.

The purpose of the RCC is to make abortion impossible to ignore or trivialize. Public opinion surveys reveal that a large majority of Americans now oppose "pregnancy termination" in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy – especially if performed by "partial-birth" abortion. A smaller but still substantial majority support a right of abortion if it is committed in the first trimester of pregnancy. This fact is problematic from a pro-life perspective because The Centers For Disease Control report that some 90% of abortions are committed in the first three months of pregnancy.

These same surveys also disclose that public support for early abortion derives from the inaccurate perception that the first trimester baby is a mere "blob of tissue." In contrast, most Americans see the mid and late-term fetus as a real "baby" whose level of gestational development entitles it to rights of personhood. It is also clear that few Americans believe a suction abortion to be the moral equivalent of a "partial-birth abortion." We, therefore, conclude that it is vital to convince the public that the first term baby is as fully entitled to rights of personhood as a more mature fetus and that even an early abortion is as indefensible an act of violence as any "partial-birth" abortion. Extensive focus group research has proven conclusively that our pictures are the most effective means by which to achieve that goal.

RCC is a tactic which is consistent with mainstream campaigns of social reform. Shocking pictures have traditionally been used to dramatize injustice sought to be reformed in the areas of child labor abuses, civil rights for African Americans, U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, environmental causes, etc. What has changed is that for the first time in recent history, political conservatives are using this tactic in an effort to reform an unjust status quo which is being defended by political liberals.

It should also be noted that we believe it is important to protect children from exposure to disturbing photos, whether those photos depict aborted babies or any other shocking subject. That is why we base the trucks which exhibit our anti-abortion billboards in a location that is entirely industrial/commercial in its zoning. We will go out of our way to choose routes which minimize the time we must spend near residential neighborhoods. We will concentrate the truck routes on freeways rather than city streets. We will not knowingly drive past elementary schools, playgrounds, daycare centers, etc.

There is, however, no operating location in which we can guarantee that no child will ever see these painful images. The same risks to children exist every time the television is turned on. Sickening images are likely to appear, even during early prime time. The same is true with disgusting photos on the covers of magazines openly displayed at the checkout stands of supermarkets. Billboards are also increasingly likely to exhibit images inappropriate for young children.

When NBC Television broadcast Steven Spielberg's Holocaust movie, *Schindler's List*, in its early prime-time "family hour" slot (as PBS recently did again), then Congressman Tom Coburn, R-Ok., expressed concern over the large numbers of children who were exposed to the movie's extreme violence, profanity and explicit sexual content. His colleagues mocked him to scorn. UPI reported that Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., believed "the film belongs on television to educate children about one of the darkest chapters in human history." The article said "Foley agrees it was brutal, but truthful, telling of a 'demonic creature who was murdering millions of Jews' But he says it is a story that should be told and remembered without any attempt to 'camouflage ... that evilness.'"

The New York Times quoted Rep. Tom Lantos, even more forcefully: "... Lantos, a California Democrat who is the only Holocaust survivor in the Congress, said Mr. Coburn should have been more concerned with the children who were killed than with young viewers' hearing four-letter words." *The Tulsa World* also covered the controversy. Lantos was quoted as dismissing as "petty" Coburn's concerns about children seeing horrifying violence. "He is dead wrong" Lantos said. He added "When you want 65 million Americans to watch ... you don't start at midnight. These are such petty and certainly misplaced priorities." Lantos even questioned Coburn's integrity. "I think this is such a phony argument" he said. "It is such cheap political grandstanding, my stomach turns." Rep. Martin Frost, D-Tx., also piled-on, saying Coburn demonstrated a "lack of compassion" toward Holocaust victims.

Now that children will be seeing our aborted baby pictures, will those who savaged Rep. Coburn be as quick to defend our First Amendment rights as they were to defend NBC's? We think it unlikely.

The Center For Bio-Ethical Reform will not submit to a two-tiered standard for free speech: A permissive standard for the expression of liberal ideology and a restrictive standard for the expression of conservative thought.

Our photos *save* unborn children and *disturb* born children everywhere they are displayed. The question which must be answered by our critics is simple: Do they care more about the *feelings* of kids than the *lives* of fetuses? If so, they are not pro-life, they are "pro-feelings." We respectfully refuse to allow people who are not pro-life to cover-up the truth about abortion. Those days are gone and we will not go back.

Abortion is not exacting enough of an emotional toll on American society. The culture is in massive denial about what abortion is and does. Social reformers must always force-feed facts into the heads of people who are reluctant to accept evidence of their own complicity in injustice. The Reproductive "Choice" Campaign will be used to disturb the nation until the stress becomes unbearable. Because the news media, entertainment media, education establishment, clergy, etc. are suppressing the truth about what abortion is and does, we will bypass these gatekeepers and take our message directly to our target audience. The May 28, 2001 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* featured a cover story about that audience. It was entitled "Traffic." The article reported that:

Since 1982, while the U.S population has grown nearly 20 percent, the time Americans spend in traffic has jumped an amazing 236 percent. In major American cities, the length of the combined morning-evening rush hour has doubled, from under three hours in 1982 to almost six hours today.

Data compiled by the California Department of Motor Vehicles suggests that during rush hour, up to 50,000 people per hour will view the pictures displayed on *each* of our individual trucks. The freeway is the last place where viewers can neither turn the page nor change the channel. We have been presented with a vast captive audience and we will take full advantage of the fact that most will give our signs at least one curious glance. Once these pictures are in people's heads, they will never get them out. Every time viewers thereafter hear the word abortion, a disturbing picture will go off in their brains. Those with a functioning conscience will eventually change their points of view.

We understand that this project will not make us popular, even with many groups which call themselves "pro-life." We are losing the abortion battle precisely because so many "pro-life" organizations mistakenly believe they must be "liked" to be effective. But CBR is not trying to win a popularity contest. We are trying to effect social reform. Social reformers are never liked. We care less what people think of us than what they think of abortion. We are willing to have them hate us if that is the price which must be paid to have them ultimately hate abortion.

Those who retaliate against us with violence will only help focus public attention on our project. They will thereby unwittingly unmask the pro-abortion propensity for brutality. They will also inadvertently help us recruit staff and raise funds. As racists blamed Martin Luther King for creating a climate conducive to the riots he condemned, we expect to be accused of inciting similar unrest with our pictures. As was true of Dr. King, we also deplore violence but we will not be deterred by its threat against us. We are more determined to save babies than our adversaries are to kill them.