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People are worth even more than kidneys

By Brigitte Pellerin and Andrea Mrozek

'People are kidneys too.' It's a new Rod Bruinooge-inspired T-shirt we're considering. Mr. Bruinooge wants us to think about giving as much protection to Canadian babies as we do individual body parts and that, we find, is a New Year's resolution we can get behind.

Mr. Bruinooge, the young, aboriginal Tory MP for Winnipeg South, who recently became chairman of the multi-party Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus, managed to make a name for himself and make the Hill buzz in the few short days between Christmas turkey and New Year's champagne. And all it took was a clever metaphor.

In Canada, he explained, there are many more legal obstacles to selling your kidneys than there are to killing your unborn child. So, he said, "The bottom line is that people like myself are not going to stop until, at the very least, unborn children have more value than a Canadian kidney."

It's a brilliant line. We wish we'd thought of it ourselves. We actually do live in a society that cares more about what you do with your spare parts than what you do with an entire, if tiny, human being. And every time someone tries to talk about the issue of abortion, feminists and their allies (very much including Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper and most of the Tory cabinet) shut down the debate to protect a woman's "right to choose."

That's why ProWomanProLife was started almost a year ago. We wanted to be a voice for women and their babies -- yes, at the very same time. To highlight how the Supreme Court of Canada never said abortion was a right of any kind. And especially to challenge the assumption that being pro-life somehow means being anti-woman. So you can see why we're so thrilled to see Mr. Bruinooge force the debate out into the open.

We want to applaud him but also caution him: He's in for one heck of a ride. Every time someone questions the comfortably silent "status quo" on abortion, the same objections come up: 1) this issue is settled and Canadians are happy with the results; 2) all this talk of late-term abortions is useless because they simply don't happen in Canada unless the health of the mother is seriously compromised by the pregnancy. After that come vague accusations that those of us who would like to discuss and challenge the anything-goes status quo are misogynists and anti-fun.

Well.

We could cite several polls showing where Canadians really stand on the issue of abortion (most of them are somewhere in the mushy middle; they want to keep it legal but with some limitations). But it's not necessary. The outcry makes our point for us: If Canadians were really so happy with the current legal system in which a woman can legally have an abortion at any point in her pregnancy for any reason whatsoever, reporters wouldn't double-check the correct pronunciation of "Bruinooge."

As for whether or not late-term abortions happen and if so, how often and for what reason, like most of the other pro-choice arguments, it's not solid. If they don't happen, then regulating when and why late-term abortions are allowed wouldn't change much. And if they do happen, Canadians deserve a chance to debate why, exactly, we currently allow abortion well past the point of viability while we severely regulate smoking.

These pro-abortion arguments are not difficult to counter. But Mr. Bruinooge will have to keep countering them over and over and over again, and fend off accusations that he is "secretive," sinister and a bad person. Such charges are a convenient way for the pro-abortion crowd to get out of an uncomfortably tight spot. And since anything that forces them to talk about abortion and what it actually does is uncomfortable, they repeat the same things a fair bit. For while the various pro-life (or anti-choice) factions disagree on a lot of things, there is only one possible position for the radical pro-choice (or anti-life) side: Unrestricted and publicly financed abortion. Any concession at all threatens the whole thing.

That's why they go into apoplectic overdrive at the thought of punishing a criminal who attacks a pregnant woman more severely. To most Canadians it seems like a no-brainer. But to radical pro-choicers trying to protect what's inside a pregnant woman's tummy is an assault on women's "rights."

Mr. Bruinooge is trying to challenge the old tired assumptions and worn-out rhetoric from within Parliament, in an open and courteous way. He has our kudos and our support. Unrestricted abortion is not the hallmark of a civilized society but vigorous debate, tolerant of divergent points of view is.

Our view is that people are -- at least -- kidneys, too. And what this country needs is more people willing to wear the T-shirt.

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