

File Copy

DOROTHY KENYON
Counsellor at Law
433 West 21st Street
New York, New York 10011

February 21, 1967

Dear Fellow Board Member:

For lo! these many years I have been a Cassandra crying out in the A.C.L.U. wilderness against the crime of our abortion laws and man's inhumanity to women. I have been met with answers: A purely social problem: Religion is involved: Too hot to handle, etc., etc.

Last week we met the issue face to face. It was not an auspicious occasion for me. The due process committee, on which I serve, had met the week before and I had stated my position clearly and fully. A few members of the committee had said they were, or were inclined to be, in basic agreement with me. The committee report however contained no syllable that I could find in regard to this except for the single word "almost" in front of its "unanimous" report. I received it too late to voice my objections to our chairman, Ed Ennis, but figured I could do so at the next Board meeting.

The board meeting itself was set at an almost impossible hour for me. I earn my bread and butter practising law and, due to unavoidable professional engagements, I could not get there until very late, of which fact I duly notified the office. I knew the committee report was at the end of a long agenda, however, and figured that I could get there in time for it.

When I arrived the report was under discussion, Harriet Pilpel having for good reason asked for its advance on the calendar. God knows what Ed Ennis said in his committee report but, judging by the language of the report itself, I felt convinced he had given no hint of my minority position. (I understand now that I probably did him an injustice). As a member of the committee I believed myself entitled to express my dissent. But I was overruled. I was even told my substitute motion was out of order although another such motion was eventually accepted from someone else and I believe passed.

I do not comment on the parliamentary tactics but I do on the discussion which followed: It was a shambles of irrelevance and illogic rivalled only by the worst of the Helen Hokinson type women's clubs.

My position is simple - the abortion law is a violation of civil liberties because it imposes upon women a kind of bodily slavery in respect to their most important bodily function not seen in this country since slavery days nor in Europe since Hitler. It is a mockery of democracy, with its supposed human rights and dignity for all, that women should be forced by government to bear children

(over)

Dorothy Kenyon

-2-

February 21, 1967

against their will. We all know that the bodies of slaves belonged to their masters. But only Hitler could create the obscenity of women's bodies belonging (in this crucial function of theirs) to the state.

Religions, being free, are entitled to believe anything they choose. But by the same token they have no right to impose their beliefs on others.

I enclose a clipping from the Times by Marya Mannes. Marya, bless her heart, appears to agree with me.

Yours,

Dorothy Kenyon

DK:bk
Enclosure