



Speech by

Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Thursday, 11 October 2007

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN EMBRYOS AND PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (11.35 am): I intend speaking very briefly to place on record my consideration of the Research Involving Human Embryos and Prohibition of Human Cloning Amendment Bill. At their essence these amendments represent legislative proposals to permit cloning of embryonic cells for the purposes of stem cell therapy research. Having carefully considered the legislation and the wide range of views amongst my constituents, I will be supporting the bill.

Having listened to my constituents and having heard the debate in the wider community and, indeed, so far in this House, it appears that opposition to the legislation is based on two planks. Firstly, that all embryonic material is life and research using such material is morally wrong; secondly, that adult stem cell research has equal, or indeed greater, potential to achieve the therapeutic hopes which we all would like to see.

While respecting the deeply held moral convictions of those opposed to embryonic stem cell research in my electorate and indeed in this House, I personally do not believe parliament should be enforcing a moral conviction, especially one where there is a significant diversity of opinion and conviction within our community. Further, adult stem cell research is an exciting field, which I hope will yield outcomes in terms of therapies for debilitating and life-threatening conditions.

However, science, and human knowledge generally, has never been advanced by denying avenues of research. Embryonic and adult stem cell research may both realise tremendous benefits for the health and wellbeing of our community. Further, I am satisfied that the ethics review processes in place for all research will protect broad community values.

Science is not a danger. Science has been proven to be a saviour. It may not be in this case, but I will not stand in the way of science. In the tradition of the Anatomy Act 1832, I support medical research. I support scientific progress in the face of moral controversy. I commend the bill to the House.