

PRIME MINISTER

IN VITRO EMBRYOS : POSSIBLE ENQUIRY

In my minute of 20 February I referred to the issues arising from in vitro fertilisation and suggestions for an enquiry, and explained that I did not think that further action should wait on the advice which has been sought from medical bodies. I am grateful for the Lord Chancellor's comments, which I will take into account.

I have in fact now heard from the General Medical Council that they would have no objection to a multi-disciplinary public inquiry, and would be prepared to take part if we wished.

Mr Abse gave notice on 1 March of a private member's Motion which is second order for debate this Friday: it asks for an "interdepartmental interdisciplinary advisory committee" to report on the social, medical, legal and ethical issues involved in the creation of in vitro embryos. It is possible that the Motion will not be reached. If it is, I propose that the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Mr Geoffrey Finsberg) should say that the Government does consider that an enquiry into this matter is required, but has not yet reached conclusions on the best form that such an enquiry should take; however, it is clearly desirable that it should be multi-disciplinary in character; the views expressed in the debate will assist the Government in considering its constitution and scope. A firm commitment at this stage to an "interdepartmental committee" or on Mr Abse's proposal that half of the members should be women, would not I think be appropriate.

I am copying this minute to colleagues, as before, and to the Secretary of the Cabinet.

4 March 1982

N F

Prime Minister

To be aware of the proposed handling of Mr Abse's motion.

Pl see also Lady Young's comment - below - on the enquiry idea.

MAP
4/3



PLATE NUMBER

- 4 MAR 1982

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In my report of 20 February I referred to the demand for a
from in vitro fertilization and suggestions for an enquiry,
and explained that I did not think that further action should
wait on the advice which has been sought from the relevant bodies.
I am grateful for the Lord Chancellor's comments, which I will
take into account.

I have to say that some of the points raised in the report
they would have no objection to a multi-disciplinary enquiry,
industry, and would be prepared to take part in it.

As I have noted on a number of occasions, the
which is a good basis for debate. It is also for the
"interdepartmental inter-disciplinary advisory committee" to
report on the social, medical, legal and ethical issues involved
in the creation of in vitro embryos. It is possible that the
bottom will not be reached. If it is, I propose that the
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Mr Geoffrey Thomas)
should say that the Government has considered that an enquiry
into this matter is required, but has not yet reached conclusions.

On the last point that was an enquiry about the
is clearly desirable that it should be multi-disciplinary in
character. The views expressed in the debate will assist the
Government in considering its constitution and scope. A first
statement at this stage to an "interdepartmental committee" or
on the subject of the bill of the House should be
you, nor I think be comparable.
I am grateful for the minutes to the relevant committees, and to the
Secretary of the Cabinet.