

TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 115 (Sen. Daniel Martiny)

“To Prohibit Human-Animal Hybrids”

Senate Judiciary A (5-12-09) and House Administration of Criminal Justice (6-1-09) Committees

Good morning, Mr./Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee!

My name is Dr. W. A. Krotoski. I am a physician and retired medical scientist, with M.D., Ph.D. and M.P.H. degrees. I have lived in Louisiana since 1974, and in Baton Rouge since 1982. Currently, I am President of, and represent *The Hippocratic Resource*, a Louisiana-wide organization of physicians, dentists, nurses, scientists and other health professionals who have committed to promoting the life-respecting principles of the Hippocratic Oath – the foundation of medical ethics – and objective truth in Medicine. My active career included 26 years with the U.S. Public Health Service, produced some 55 research articles, co-authorship of one medical text, and several chapters for others. In 1989 my work was honored by a nomination for the Nobel prize in physiology and medicine. I have taught at both Tulane and LSU Schools of Medicine and Public Health, and also their Graduate Schools. Currently, I continue to serve on the research ethics board of Baton Rouge General Medical Center – in fact, I came here directly from a meeting - and have recently published an article related to human cloning in *The Linacre Quarterly*, a journal devoted to the philosophy and ethics of medical practice. I mention all this, not for any personal aggrandizement, but to serve as a basis for my comments on Senator Martiny’s bill to ban the creation of animal-human hybrids in Louisiana.

When I testified in favor of a bill to prohibit funding of human cloning in Louisiana before the Senate Health & Welfare Committee almost exactly one year ago, I fully expected that animal-human hybridization would come under the same proscription because of similarities in techniques. However, it did not, possibly because the concept of such hybrids was too alien to consider in a rational environment – despite the fact that the British Parliament had approved such work in Britain only days earlier – and possibly because of unfounded fears that prohibiting it would impact in some way on animal cloning as a promising tool for improving animal food stocks. Let me be quite clear: prohibition of human-animal hybridization, or production of chimeras, would not have any negative impact on such work; those in animal research who might seek to do it would be doing nothing other than indulging in degrading the human genome to try to improve that of animals. Bear in mind, however, that even if not ethically proscribed, such mixing of species could have effects in some way analogous to what we have seen recently – and may see more of in November – the results of *natural* mixing of human, swine and bird influenza viruses to produce a potentially more dangerous “swine ‘flu’.”

Potential inter-species mixing by bestiality, the coupling of humans and animals, has “always” been considered a moral-ethical abomination in our Western culture; however, the real possibility of animal-human hybridization has come about only as the direct result of modern technologies that are capable of breaking natural species barriers. Today, micro-techniques that permit manipulation of human and animal gametes (or “sex” cells) and embryos have made human cloning a reachable possibility, even though formally banned by the Council of Europe – for moral and ethical reasons – beginning in March 2001. Despite such bans, some mad scientist or other tries to clone a human being periodically – which does not make bans worthless, but underlines the need for them, as well as sanctions against those who choose to transgress (after all, we have bans against murder, rape, etc., yet all too many transgressors). Those same techniques can be used to manufacture human-to-animal or animal-to-human hybrid clones – and the first of these – a rabbit-human chimera – was manufactured in China in 2003. Although it was killed after a few days, the technological point was made, and, since then, there has been the occasional attempt to make other animal-human hybrids at the early stage of life, or to implant human brain cells into embryonic mice to see if there is a tendency for development toward a human brain, while pig-human and other hybrids have also been reported. The danger of exceeding moral/ethical bounds by animal-human hybridization was recognized by Canada several years ago, resulting in a ban on chimera research there. It is clearly time for Louisiana to institute a ban on this type of experimentation, and Senator Martiny’s bill would effectively close the door on all such unethical tinkering. Senators, I urge you to report this bill favorably.

Thank you very much! If there are questions, I will try to answer them.

W. A. Krotoski, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H.
President

The Hippocratic Resource, Baton Rouge, LA