



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 25, 2016

Disabled U.K. Lawmaker: End Abortion Discrimination Against Disabled

Declaring current abortion law in the United Kingdom “eugenic,” Lord Kevin Shinkwin (shown) offered an impassioned [speech](#) Friday urging passage of a bill he introduced to put an end to the law’s “corrosive, unjust and deeply discriminatory” language that permits aborting a disabled baby right up to the time of his birth while restricting the time during which a healthy baby may be aborted.



“From this disabled person’s perspective, there is a stark anomaly, an inconsistency in the law, whereby discrimination on grounds of disability is both prohibited in law after birth yet, confusingly, actually enshrined in law at the very point at which the discrimination begins, at source, before birth,” Shinkwin, who suffers from the genetic disorder brittle bone disease, said during his opening remarks on the second reading of his Abortion (Disability Equality) Bill in the House of Lords.

The U.K.’s Abortion Act of 1967 permits the abortion of babies during their first 24 weeks of gestation. Section 1(1)(d) of the act, however, also allows for abortion at any time prior to delivery, not just the first 24 weeks, if “there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.”

“It is illegal for an unborn human being to have their life ended by abortion beyond 24 weeks, but if they have a disability their life can be ended right up to birth by law. Where is the consistency, the justice or the equality in that?” Shinkwin [asked](#) when introducing the bill earlier this year.

“If anyone thinks such obvious discrimination is acceptable, I respectfully invite them to imagine the outcry if the same were applied to skin color or sexual orientation. Such discrimination would rightly be regarded as outrageous.”

Whether or not one finds discrimination on particular grounds to be “outrageous” and worthy of legal prohibition when applied to those who have been born, the fact is that the U.K. government does indeed have various laws prohibiting such discrimination while simultaneously encouraging discrimination against disabled babies in the womb.

“Our legislation currently affords unborn disabled babies significantly less protection than that which is afforded those who are able bodied,” Lord David Alton said in his [remarks](#) supporting Shinkwin’s bill. “Paradoxically, we will campaign and raise our voices for wheelchair ramps to be placed on public buildings but fail to uphold the innate right to life itself of the disabled person who uses that wheelchair.”

The Lords are not speaking hypothetically. With the increase in prenatal screenings for various disabilities has indeed come an increase in abortions to prevent the “unfit” from being born — a practice “of which a [particular regime](#) of the 1930s and 1940s would heartily approve,” Shinkwin pointedly observed Friday.



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“For unborn babies whose disability is detected, a mother’s womb has become an increasingly dangerous place,” he averred.

Citing statistics from the Department of Health — statistics that a 2014 review found were likely too low because of underreporting — Shinkwin noted that the number of abortions after 24 weeks on the grounds of disability had increased 271 percent over the last 20 years and 56 percent in just the last five. The overall number of abortions on the grounds of disability, regardless of the point of gestation at which they occurred, has grown by 68 percent over the last 10 years. Over one-fifth of the unborn killed in 2015 were aborted because they had Down syndrome. Alton pointed out that already about 90 percent of Down syndrome babies are aborted; that rate is almost certain to rise even higher once the government implements a new technique that can detect the condition in unborn babies with 99-percent accuracy. In addition, Shinkwin said, last year 11 babies were aborted because they had cleft lip or palate despite the fact that such a condition can now be easily corrected via surgery.

“I find the contrast between the 0.3-percent decline over the last decade in the number of overall abortions and the rise in the number of abortions on unborn babies detected with a disability alarming and deeply offensive,” Shinkwin added.

“What does it say about us and our society,” inquired Alton, “when amniocentesis and other tests are used as part of [a] search and destroy mission with barely a murmur of dissent?”

Alton pointed to government reports showing that parents in the U.K. are routinely pressured into aborting their babies if prenatal tests detect any disabilities. Mothers reported that their doctors became angry with them for refusing to abort; one said her doctor “threatened that all medical help would be denied.” Those who gave birth to disabled children claimed they were later criticized by their doctors for having failed to abort. One parent said, “I have heard views expressed that suggest my child is seen as a drain on resources.”

This is hardly unexpected in a country in which the government owns and operates the healthcare system. Disabled people are a huge drain on socialized medicine’s limited resources, so it is only natural that the bureaucrats with the green eyeshades would want to do away with them as early as possible. And doctors, having become agents of the state rather than advocates for their patients, are only too willing to go along with the program.

“As a disabled person,” said Shinkwin, “I am a prime candidate for abortion on the grounds of disability. I admit that I would like to say to the eugenicists in the Department of Health and those who obviously fail to appreciate the enormity of what is being perpetrated in our name: ‘How dare you? How dare you wipe us out as mere conditions?’”

Of course, as Shinkwin well understands, they “dare” because the practice of aborting disabled babies has become “normalized,” even expected. “I suggest that, collectively, we are in denial about the consequences of the choices we have made,” he maintained.

One of those consequences, remarked Alton, is that the disabled who are born are viewed with disdain. “What does it say to the survivors — those who have been inconsiderate enough to avoid the perfection test and have somehow managed to slip through the net?” he asked.

Shinkwin recognizes that his bill, which would strike Section 1(1)(d) of the abortion act, will not put an end to the practice of aborting babies because of detected disabilities, but it will at least restrict the time period in which they may be aborted, putting them on an equal footing with non-disabled babies. Moreover, wrote [Live Action News](#), “If passed, Lord Shinkwin’s bill could be the most significant pro-life



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legislation since abortion was legalized in the UK.”

After Friday’s debate, the House of Lords moved Shinkwin’s bill to committee, the next step in its long road to possible passage. Should it become law, it not only will create parity for healthy and disabled unborn babies but also will bear out Shinkwin’s defiant rejoinder to supporters of the status quo: “I am your equal. I will not be defined by my disability. I will be defined by who I am and by my contribution to your Lordships’ House and public service.”

Image: screenshot from YouTube video of Lord Shinkwin speaking to House of Lords



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