

### **Letter to *The Spectator***

#### **IVF Treatment and the Need for a Father**

Sir: I doubt your suggestion that clause 14(2)(b) of the Government's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill is a moral disgrace. The Bill breaks new ground in allowing two people of the same sex to be registered as the sole parents of a baby born through IVF. With female joint parents this raised the question of what was to be done about the provision in the **Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990** which requires that a woman shall not be provided with IVF treatment unless account is taken of the welfare of any resulting child. A parenthesis adds "(including the need of that child for a father)".

This "need" can scarcely arise when two women are the sole registered parents or a single IVF mother has no relationship with the child's biological father. The Government's first answer was simply to repeal the now inappropriate parenthesis. A storm ensued. [As **Lady Deech** put it, the Government had opened up a hornets' nest.] The Government responded with the present wording of clause 14(2)(b), which removes "a father" and substitutes "supportive parenting".

This logically follows from the major change in legal policy, embedded in recent legislation, which prohibits homophobia, treats a lesbian household as morally equivalent to a heterosexual one, and accordingly allows a lesbian couple to adopt a child or procure one through IVF treatment. Unless this major change is in itself a "moral disgrace", which few would nowadays argue, then clause 14(2)(b) cannot be one.

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