

** these are the comments presented by Dr. Berger to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, regarding Bill C-279.*

DR JOSEPH BERGER - I was asked to make a statement with reference to a bill C-279 that is under consideration. It appears to me that this bill requests that some special allowances or attitudes or possibly even 'rights' be given to people who identify themselves as being 'transgendered'.

From a scientific perspective, let me clarify what 'transgendered' actually means. I am speaking now about the scientific perspective – and not any political lobbying position that may be proposed by any group, medical or non-medical.

'Transgendered' are people who claim that they really are or wish to be people of the sex opposite to which they were born as, or to which their chromosomal configuration attests.

Sometimes, some of these people have claimed that they are 'a woman trapped in a man's body' or alternatively 'a man trapped in a woman's body'. Scientifically, there is no such a thing. Therefore anyone who actually *truly believes* that notion, is by definition deluded, psychotic.

The medical treatment of delusions or psychosis is not by surgery.

On the other hand, if these people are asked to clarify exactly what they believe, that is to say do they truly believe whichever of those above propositions applies to them and they say 'no', they know that such a proposition is not true, but that they 'feel' it, then what we are talking about scientifically, is just unhappiness, and that unhappiness is being accompanied by a wish – that leads some people into taking hormones that predominate in the other sex, and even having cosmetic surgery designed to make them 'appear' as if they are a person of the opposite sex.

The proper treatment of emotional unhappiness is not surgery. Cosmetic surgery will not change the chromosomes of a human being. Cosmetic surgery will not make a man become a woman, capable of menstruating, ovulating, and having children. Cosmetic surgery will not make a woman into a man, capable of generating sperm that can unite with an egg or ovum from a woman and fertilize that egg to produce a human child.

These are the scientific facts. There seems to me to be no medical or scientific reason to grant any special rights or considerations to people who are unhappy with the sex they were born into, or to people who wish to dress in the clothes of the opposite sex – which I believe is not illegal.

I have read the brief put forward by those advocating special rights, and I find nothing of scientific value in it. Words and phrases are used that have no objective scientific basis such as "the inner space".

The committee examining these proposals should be aware that there are indeed some quite rare examples where the sex of a baby at birth is uncertain. Two particular conditions are well recognized.

One is where the child is a boy, but the testes have not descended into the testicular sac, but remain somewhere 'stuck' in the abdomen.

The other well-recognized condition is where the child is a girl, but because of some abnormal hormonal levels as the baby was growing in the mother's uterus, the clitoris of the baby girl is unusually large, and might at first be mistaken for a penis.

Both these conditions are now diagnosed earlier, chromosome testing to confirm the genetic sex is widely available. They should not nowadays lead to any confusion about the real sex of the baby. Other than these and possibly even rarer abnormalities, the so-called 'confusion' about their sexuality that a teenager or adult has is purely psychological.

As a psychiatrist, I see no reason for people who identify themselves in these ways to have any rights or privileges different from everyone else in Canada.

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