

Abortion

better to incur those huge costs than it is to waste our money on useless war toys like nuclear submarines.

Children need and demand an extensive amount of nurturing, watching, attending, and loving. All of this conflicts so often with a consumer driven, upwardly mobile society. The ideal has become: double income and no kids. Why? So that more of the good things of this world can be accumulated and acquired.

Sir, few can have it both ways. You cannot have it all and children as well. Those two life-styles are often seen as incompatible. Children are extremely costly to raise and parental responsibilities tend to go on and on before those children become fully independent and self-supporting adults.

Having said that, the decision not to have children is entirely a personal one. However, to abort a foetus goes beyond the personal. It involves society as a whole. That point of view is supported and backed up by the recent Supreme Court decision. Thus, I contend that consumerism, materialism, and plain selfishness are possible motives which may lie in part at least behind the call for abortion on demand.

• (1700)

Those who are pro-life are not necessarily stupid and ignorant as Henry Morgentaler has charged. They may in fact be more caring, more compassionate and concerned, less ruthless and far more respectful of life in all its many manifestations and more willing to share what they have.

Morris C. Shumiacher, a distinguished and highly respected legal counsel from Regina, Saskatchewan, said in an address to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons the following:

There is no challenge in death—only defeat. There is no hope in destruction—only despair. Therefore choose not death but life that the world may not despair and die. Choose life—that we may live.

The Supreme Court of Canada will in due course, shortly, have to rule on the meaning in our Constitution of the phrase that stands out whenever I read it which says that everyone has the right to life. What the Supreme Court will decide in that pending case I do not know. However, for me, the right to life applies equally to the born and to the unborn. It therefore follows, again in my view, that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that this right to life is protected "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society". Based on that constitutional principle, there would be many, many fewer abortions performed in Canada.

The Government's motion with regard to abortion is not one that I am, in all conscience, able to accept. I am grateful for the debate. The motion, however, is not acceptable. I will, therefore, on Thursday be voting against it.

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, let me briefly outline some of the arguments in support of the pro-life position on abortion, a position which I have consistently and unequivocally held up throughout my tenure in public office.

The case can best be put by simply allowing the biological and physiological facts to speak for themselves.

First, it is well known that all the information necessary for the development of each of us as a unique human being is contained in the genetic code that is present from the moment of conception. The colour of our eyes, the size of our feet, and the capacity of our brains have all been established in that instant. Nothing needs to be added other than food, shelter, and care.

Second, the indicators of life and development are early and dramatic. The unborn produces its own blood at 17 to 20 days after conception. Its heart begins beating at 24 to 25 days. Between the sixth and seventh weeks, the electrical activity of the brain is readable, and at eight weeks all the essential organs are present. The unborn can cry, hiccup, develop individual tastes, be startled, and feel pain. Indeed, according to Sir William Liley of New Zealand, knighted because of his pioneering work in amniocentesis, the unborn child is not a part of the mother's body but is a separate person who dictates its own growth and when he or she is to be born.

Third, apart from abortion, the medical community treats the foetus as any other patient. It is now possible to perform corrective surgery on the foetus while still in the womb or even to remove, operate on, and subsequently replace the foetus so that it may come to full term. Clearly, it cannot be and it is not viewed as a piece of tissue to be removed and discarded at will.

Fourth, remarkable developments in neo-natal technology now allow foetal viability as early as five months from conception. Witness, for example, the survival of a baby recently born here in Ottawa at just 21 weeks gestation. Yet we know that abortions are even now being performed upon foetuses above and beyond 21 weeks development and furthermore that some of these have even survived the attempts to abort them.

The fact that the unborn are now viable at increasingly early stages of development has rendered the whole question of foetal viability something of a moving target. It is forcing American legislators to reconsider their trimester approach to abortion. Why then, I ask of those of my colleagues who are in favour of a gestational approach, must we repeat the errors and ignore the lessons of the American experience?

Finally, I think it is instructive to read how, in 1975, after an exhaustive examination of the available biological and physiological evidence by 133 world renowned scientists, geneticists, and gynaecologists, the West German Federal Constitutional Court responded to the question as to when life begins. The court was acutely conscious of the events which took place in Germany between 1933 and 1945 and was therefore especially anxious to ground its judgment in scientific objectivity. Its conclusion was:

Life, in the sense of historical existence of a human individual, exists according to definite biological-physiological knowledge, in any case, from the 14th day after conception (nidation, individuation) . . . The process of