

Criminal Code

For far too long the minority in this country has held back the majority in this matter. Certainly during past weeks we have seen a demonstration of how the minority in this house has held back the majority. Now it is time that the majority be allowed the right to act according to their conscience, while respecting the right of the minority to continue in their own way according to their own conscience. The other night I heard the Creditiste leader say on television in loud and clear tones, "They must respect us as we respect them." We intend to respect them and we have proven that respect. This legislation will show respect for people who do not believe in abortions. On the other hand, those of us who believe in the modernization of abortion laws are not going to allow any minority in this country to hold back measures which are needed by the citizens of Canada.

Mr. Caouette: Would the hon. lady permit a question? I agree that the minority should not impose its views upon the majority, but would the hon. lady not admit that a referendum should be held across the country on this very matter so that we can determine the views of the majority and of the minority?

Mrs. MacInnis: I believe it is the job of the government to govern, and once that government has implemented its policies in legislation the referendum will come at the next election. If these people can prove that they are the majority, then we shall have a referendum in the right way, at the right time, and in the right place.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Loiselle: The hon. member is speaking like a Liberal now.

Mr. Lewis: Do not insult her. She is doing well.

Mrs. MacInnis: I should like to say a word now about clause 18 and the premises where abortions are to be permitted. I am very glad to see that since this legislation was introduced the government has added approved hospitals to the former provision which simply said that accredited hospitals would be the only places where abortions could be performed. I think this is a very wise change because accredited hospitals are far too narrow a base for the operation of the new legislation. If the clause had not been changed, the result might well have contributed to the pile-up of abortions such as we have seen in other countries. Second, some districts have

no accredited hospitals, and consequently abortions should be allowed to be performed in approved hospitals, which means approved under the laws of the province wherein they are situated. Third, some accredited hospitals will not want to perform abortions anyway. So in order to allow an opportunity for necessary abortions to be performed, even where there are several hospitals available in our cities, we are very glad that the government has added "approved hospitals" to "accredited hospitals" as places where abortions can be performed. Eventually—and this would help in more scattered areas—I believe abortions should be allowed to be performed legally in well equipped and approved medical clinics and even in well equipped and approved doctor's offices. We are not ready for that at the present time but eventually this should be done.

The facts about abortion are shrouded in an emotional fog which it has been very difficult to penetrate even in the long investigation that has been carried out. Recently I witnessed a film which showed an eight-month foetus which was almost a completed human being. It was very recognizably human. In that film the impression was given that this almost completed human being was a fit subject for abortion. I raged when I saw it because there was no opportunity to say anything about it then. This impression is all wrong. Abortions could and should be performed before the end of the third month of pregnancy. The safe limit is the twelfth week of pregnancy. This has been brought out in evidence over and over again. The knife is not the only way. We have been told over and over again by some witnesses before the committee that an abortion is a dreadful thing, that it involves the loss of vast quantities of blood, haemorrhaging, mutilation, and all kinds of other complications. This is a great exaggeration. For example, the new suction or vacuum method is in wide use in countries behind the iron curtain as well as in other countries, notably Japan and Israel. I myself have witnessed such an abortion which was performed on a two-month foetus. It required only a local anaesthetic, took 15 minutes to perform, and was carried out by a regular qualified doctor in Canada. It caused practically no bleeding—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member. Has the hon. member the unanimous agreement of the house to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.