

*Abortion*

practitioners convicted under Sections 251 and 251 and drop prosecutions under those sections. In that context, I pay tribute to the leadership and courage that has been shown by Henry Morgentaler in leading the fight for access to safe therapeutic abortions in Canada. We are all awaiting the outcome of his challenge to these provisions of the Criminal Code.

Finally, the NDP would provide adequate facilities in hospitals or special clinics for sterilization and abortion procedures.

In that context, we support the campaigns which have been launched by coalitions in Ontario, Manitoba and my own Province of British Columbia recently, and elsewhere, to establish free standing medical clinics which provide a wide range of gynaecological services, including birth control counselling and abortions, fully covered by provincial health insurance plans.

It is shameful that in Canada today there is still a lack of access based upon the location of a woman. The present provisions of the Criminal Code harshly discriminate particularly against women in rural communities. They discriminate particularly against young women, teenagers, women immigrants, working class women and women of colour.

Indeed, during the hearing of the appeal from Dr. Morgentaler's acquittal on abortion charges, one of the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr. Justice Willard Estey said that a person would have to be affected with "legislative blindness" not to see that there are areas in the country where there is no access to abortion. He pointed out: "You've got whole provinces that are carved out of the process". He asked: "Is this some kind of local option which has slid into the Criminal Code?" While the question may have been rhetorical, the answer tragically is yes, that is exactly what has happened.

For example, there is no access whatsoever to safe therapeutic abortion in the Province of Prince Edward Island. It was in June, 1986, that a vote of the hospital board resulted in the deletion of the therapeutic abortion committee from the Prince County Hospital, which was the only hospital that was even theoretically providing abortions.

Since 1982, the hospital had not even allowed for any abortions whatsoever. What does this mean? It means delays which result in the risk of complications. This is particularly serious in the case of teenagers and young women. In many cases, these teenagers are afraid to tell their parents that they are pregnant.

Some time ago, June Callwood wrote very eloquently in an article about a 14-year old girl who was 10 weeks pregnant before she summoned the courage to tell her mother. She pointed out that this is not uncommon and that in some cases teenagers keep hoping that what has happened to them is merely an irregularity in their periods. However, because of the delays as a result of the provision of the Criminal Code, in too many instances complications will arise.

• (1710)

The same Government that refused to take any action to eliminate these inequitable provisions of the Criminal Code has been cutting back on funding for the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada and on funding for other programs which would help to reduce the number of abortions in Canada.

The Planned Parenthood Federation has called on governments in Canada to follow policies which would ensure universal access without financial barriers to the complete range of educational counselling and medical services relating to human sexuality and reproductive health. I might say in passing that the Planned Parenthood Federation has noted that one of the implications of the legislation on pornography, which is currently before this House, may very well be a reduction in access to information about sex education and that, in turn, could lead to an increase in the number of abortions. Too often it is the same right wing element in our community calling for a denial of choice to women which is pushing for this kind of legislation that would also deny access to information to teenagers and others who are concerned about preventing unwanted pregnancies.

The situation in Alberta is grim, indeed. The Alberta Conservative Government, in a vicious attack against women's rights, has pulled reproductive counselling, IUDs and sterilization off the list of medicare services entirely. What this means in practical terms is that far too many Canadian women are forced to leave the country in order to obtain safe therapeutic abortions. The figures are staggering. For 1984, for example, over 400 women from Prince Edward Island had to go to Maine in the United States for abortions. From Ontario, 1,200 women went to New York. From Manitoba, 680 women went to North Dakota and 700 women from Alberta went to Washington State. That is a clear indictment of the system in Canada of access to safe therapeutic abortions.

I want to take this opportunity as well to commend those organizations in Canada that have been courageously waging a tireless battle, with very limited resources, for freedom of choice for Canadian women. I speak, of course, of CARAL, a national organization that has been leading this fight, and the provincial coalitions which have been active in seeking to achieve provincial free-standing clinics.

[Translation]

I am referring to the *Coalition québécoise pour le droit à l'avortement libre et gratuit*. It is this coalition which was responsible for an action taken on October 18 and 19, just before—at any rate, it was felt that it would take place just before the Supreme Court's ruling on the legality of abortion. Women, everywhere in Canada, demanded that this Federal legislation on abortion be rescinded and insisted on obtaining open and free access to abortion services. As Mrs. Denise Larochelle, representative for the *Coalition québécoise pour le droit à l'avortement*, was reported as saying: We will continue to fight until this abortion legislation is removed from the