

*Abortion*

So I hope we will soon have a Bill, and above all that this motion will not be used to gain Brownie points during the upcoming election campaign, because I think the Government has no call to be proud of what it has tabled here today.

● (0030)

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian White (Dauphin—Swan River):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in tonight's important debate. For me the issue goes back to 1983 when I was first nominated. In the 18 months that I spent campaigning between that time and the election I was taken aback, or perhaps a little off guard, at the number of times I was confronted by future constituents on the abortion issue. Economic matters would be brought up and someone would mention the abortion issue and ask where I stood on it. It was something that took me quite by surprise. I felt that the citizens whom I was purporting to represent had a right to know where I stood on the issue.

After careful study and much reflection I decided that, should I be elected to Parliament, I would support the pro-life position on abortion whenever I had the opportunity. I feel that I was elected to serve the constituents of Dauphin—Swan River. Occasionally votes come up on moral issues such as the current abortion debate. In such issues I feel that I must vote as my conscience directs. Therefore, on Thursday my vote will reflect my pro-life position on the abortion matter.

I recognize quite clearly that many of my constituents and many other Canadians disagree with me, but I believe that a moral and very emotional issue such as abortion cannot be voted upon based on public opinion polls. We must show tolerance and respect for minorities and, at the same time, we must also protect those unable to do so for themselves, such as our unborn. I intend to vote on Thursday for the amendment which best considers the rights of our unborn, from the time of conception to birth.

On June 2, 1987, I joined with 61 other MPs in voting in favour of the motion brought forward by the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) which attempted to entrench the rights of the unborn in our Constitution. Then, as we all know, in January of 1988—in fact, the very reason that we are debating the issue tonight—the Supreme Court ruled that Section 251 of the Criminal Code was unconstitutional. At that time it was said that the ruling by the Supreme Court on Section 251 was a blow to the pro-life movement. I disagree. In fact, I was glad that Section 251 was ruled unconstitutional. I was also ashamed, quite frankly, that under Section 251 over 60,000 Canadian unborn children were aborted every year, almost 200 a day. Since 1969, when Section 251 became the law of our land, over one million Canadian unborn children have been aborted. I was ashamed to say that our country would condone such a slaughter of our unborn.

We now have the opportunity to recognize the rights of the unborn. That point was mentioned in the ruling brought down

by the Supreme Court, that it was within the power of Parliament to recognize the rights of our unborn.

Today, we have begun debate on what we as Parliamentarians feel should be the basis of legislation on abortion. Several options are available to us. The main motion, as presented, will attract many amendments that will reflect many differing opinions of how Parliament should deal with the issue.

I reject the so-called free choice option, that is, that abortion is a matter between a woman and her doctor. I reject it because it ignores a third party—a very important third party—namely the unborn child, whose very life is at stake.

At the same time, some would have us accept a compromise, that is that abortion is okay after the first trimester or perhaps that it is okay until the 24th week, which is currently in place in other countries; that somehow the foetus becomes worth while at some arbitrary point in development. I will not now, nor will I ever, accept such a compromise.

Who on this earth has a right to determine at what point in foetal development the unborn becomes too valuable to abort? Not I, not anyone. Genetic science has clearly showed us that life begins at conception. We know at that point that it is clearly defined what the eye colour of the child will be, how tall that child is going to grow up to be, the hair colour, the skin colour, the personality.

The trimester approach to abortion presents our society with many other bio-ethical issues, the first of which is foetal tissue experimentation. If the trimester approach is accepted, do we as a society then condone a scientific experimentation or organ harvesting, for example? Second, the other bio-ethical issue that is brought to mind is euthanasia. The logical extension, in my mind, of a gestational approach to abortion is to say that at a certain age a senior citizen becomes somehow arbitrarily worthless. That is as equally abhorrent to me as the arbitrary assessment of worth of the foetus as it develops. Therefore, in my opinion, the ultimate legislation must consider foetal rights from the time of conception.

● (0040)

To quote Mr. Iain Benson of the Canadian Bar Association, "what is a distinction between the foetus before birth and a child after birth, such that one has the right to life and the other does not?" I say that there is no distinction, and both must have equal rights to life.

Many Canadians claim to be defenders of human rights yet at the same time advocate abortion on demand. In my humble opinion, no person can be taken seriously on matters of human rights if they do not at the same time defend human life at its frailest, at its most defenceless, namely, in the mother's womb.

Those who support abortion on demand are dooming our unborn and taking away their most basic right, the right to life. They are dooming our unborn, whose only crime is being unwanted, who gets in the way and are not strong enough to protect himself or herself.