

*Private Members' Business*

I would hope the Rodriguez case would stimulate the kind of serious discussion I feel we need on this issue in Canada. In a way it is a right to life issue, not dissimilar in the moral context to the issue of abortion and the issue of capital punishment. By contrast those issues have received perhaps too much discussion in this country. I know all members of Parliament have received representations on those subjects for many years.

I have to say honestly that I have not received calls from any of my constituents on this issue. It is not because my constituents do not feel strongly on the issue. It is because I think the issue has become the subject of very extensive and serious dialogue among Canadians.

This has to happen because it is an issue concerning changes in medical technology and our ability to keep people alive. Sometimes I think we have developed it almost to an industry of keeping people alive no matter how miserable they may be. As a nation we will have to face that issue just as it is being faced in other countries.

We are all mindful of what is going on at the present time in Holland and the legislative changes taking place there. With all due respect, Holland is not Canada. This is a moral issue about which Canadians will have to speak. I fully expect as on all moral issues that Canadians will be as divided on this one as they are on the issues of abortion and capital punishment.

However what is important is that we start to focus serious public attention on the issue, and that is where the motion by my hon. friend does a very important public service to Canada. Whether this motion is voted up or voted down, what is significant is that the issue has been brought before Parliament. For that I thank him and I commend him.

I do not know what my own position on it is. A lot of people will be motivated perhaps by their religious beliefs. The Bible is fairly explicit: Thou shall not kill. Of course the implication of this motion is to kill. Perhaps it is a mercy killing. Perhaps it is relieving somebody of misery from which there really is no end except through death. Indeed arguments can be made in that context.

As for myself I am not motivated totally by that concept so much as by the mere issue in my mind of whether it is appropriate for government in a democratic country to authorize citizens to kill each other. I know that is not put in the context meant by my hon. friend's motion, but that certainly is one interpretation.

What is the role of physicians in society? If we go back to the Hippocratic oath or whatever, is it to save life or is it to relieve pain? I am not a physician. I am not going to tell physicians what their perception of their role should be. I guess what I am saying is that it is premature for Parliament to speak on this issue. I honestly do not feel that there has been adequate debate in Canadian society on this issue. After that debate has taken place, perhaps a Canadian view will emerge that favours a move in the direction they are going in Holland. Perhaps Canadians will say no, that it does not reflect the value important to us as Canadians.

Each member of this House will have to decide ultimately where he or she stands. Most I assume would want to know what their constituents' feelings are with respect to the issue. Because somebody is for or against capital punishment or abortion would not automatically determine whether he or she is for or against establishing some legislative basis by which euthanasia should occur.

In summary I want to say it is important Parliament and government examine the issue and what the views of Canadians may or may not be on the subject. It would be premature for Parliament to vote in an overt direction of saying it is ready to commit Canada to a legislative basis for euthanasia. I do not think Canadians are ready for that decision to be taken.

• (1130)

I think it would be premature for Parliament to make that decision. Therefore I will be voting against the resolution though I do so with some reservation. Again, when I make that point I know my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam and my colleague from Fraser Valley East spoke very eloquently on this. A private member's bill has been brought before this House on the same subject. However, I think at this point it is premature. We need to give this issue more focus. The