

*Right to Life**[Translation]*

Mrs. Lise Bourgault (Argenteuil—Papineau): Madam Speaker, as a woman and a parliamentarian, I am of course particularly interested in the motion by the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) concerning a proposal to amend Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as follows, and I quote:

—a human foetus or unborn unbeing has the right to life, liberty and security of the person;

Madam Speaker, 110 residents in my riding have sent me form letters in which they ask me to support this motion. I have taken a very careful look at the procedure used by the Hon. Member which, although in itself quite commendable, and the Hon. Member is indeed to be commended on his initiative, is indirectly an attempt to deal with the abortion issue.

Madam Speaker, in my humble opinion, the very principle of this motion contradicts the same Charter of Rights and Freedoms the Hon. Member would have amended. How could the Charter, thus amended to include fetal rights, be used before the courts who would have to deal with an issue of this nature? Are the rights of the pregnant mother less important than those of the unborn child, and vice versa? How, Madam Speaker, will we protect the rights of the unborn child? Will there be court injunctions on a woman's uterus? Another example, Madam Speaker. If we have two spouses, one of whom wants the pregnancy to come to term while the other does not, what happens? An injunction would have to be granted to one of the spouses, but how do we carry out the injunction? Would there be prisons for pregnant women?

Madam Speaker, this may seem rather ridiculous, but it is exactly the kind of situation this motion brings to mind. Madam Speaker, adopting this motion would make women the slaves of their reproductive organs and expose them to court actions by any group acting to protect the interests of the foetus.

Madam Speaker, should the courts or legislation that would arise from this amendment to the Charter order a mother not to smoke, not to drink, not to eat this or that, not to practise certain sports, not to do this or do that, if the neighbours happen to think the mother's habits are endangering the health of the foetus?

Let us be logical with ourselves, Madam Speaker. I beseech my colleagues in this House to vote against a motion which in effect is impractical, inapplicable, and unrealistic, a motion which in my humble opinion misses the real point. What our Parliament should be debating today is the situation of thousands of children who are presently being abused, who are deprived of the care they deserve, abandoned children, children who are hungry and cold. Those children, Madam Speaker, should be protected. Our time should be spent developing a true family policy, a policy concerned with the prevention and support that the State should be bringing to families or women pregnant with an unwanted child, in order to help those

women, through adequate action, keep their child until he or she is born instead of having an abortion.

In my opinion, Madam Speaker, this motion hits squarely at the autonomy, the dignity and the safety of women in Canada, and I shall therefore vote against that motion for all the reasons I have mentioned, while hoping that the Government and every concerned Canadian man and woman will strive together to develop a true family policy in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Paul Gagnon (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, the Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) should be congratulated for bringing this motion before the House. The Government should certainly be congratulated for having changed the rules to allow such a debate.

This is a very contentious issue. I sought input from my constituents and asked them the following question:

There are a number of questions; cost, use of medical talent and space, falling birth rates . . . and many others; but none addresses the central question—is the foetus a human life?

I received a number of replies, some of which I would like to read into the record. These are the "no" replies, if I may call them that. One reads:

What I do if I miss my period is my business and not the business of government—lawyers or clergy.

That is a very direct response. Another reads:

"Is a foetus a human life" is not the central question, it is the central excuse. Abortion has been going on for thousands of years and will continue to go on for thousands of years—nothing will stop it— "back alley butchers" will be sought out or self induced abortion methods will be used—more women and girls will die impaled on knitting needles or will poison themselves with Drano.

The last "no" response which I will read into the record says:

Firstly, while you stated that your belief is that abortion is a moral issue, I contend that it is a religious one since the premise that abortion is murder depends on whether or not the fetus has a soul. If, for instance, I believe that the soul does not enter into the body until sometime after a viable birth, and you believe that it happens at the moment of conception, and neither of us . . . can present absolute proof, then, it must be accepted that this is a religious matter. Therefore for you . . . to force your belief on me . . . is a violation of my rights and therefore unconstitutional. In other words, it is not your right to stop me from having an abortion—it is not my right to make you have one!!!

This writer goes on to say:

It is no argument to point out that the fetus is a living organism therefore it is wrong to stop its growth . . . Sperm and ovum are living cells but there is no need to confer citizenship on them . . . I am also aware that our present birth rate is inadequate to support our economy and that immigration will become a necessity. If Canadians are not happy—with this alternative, then maybe we have to look at why women are choosing not to have children. To force them to have children is untenable—

Those were the "nos". I will read the responses of some of those who believe in this legislation. One response reads:

In vitro fertilization has given us irrefutable scientific evidence of the fact that life begins at conception.

Your life and mine can be commenced in a dish in a laboratory—is a human womb really necessary to bring a baby to a viable point? Yes, from conception onward, all that is added is oxygen and nutrition. Everything we are now, we were then. The only thing that has changed is the place of residence from the womb to the world.