

*Criminal Code*

human. I should like to quote some of the evidence put forward at that time. One of the witnesses was Dr. L. L. de Veber, assistant professor of the Department of Pediatrics and Pathological Chemistry at the University of Western Ontario. In conjunction with two other doctors he submitted a brief to the committee, which is to be found at page 556 of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the committee for January 30, 1968. I quote:

The foetus is a unique and distinct individual from the first few weeks of life with its own circulation and its own blood group, separate tissues, and by 20 weeks or even earlier, capable of existing outside the mother. This is not to deny that the mother is the supremely important individual in the life of the foetus and that she is intimately connected with the foetus. However, to speak of the foetus as being part of her such as other organs is simply not logical or scientific.

Does the foetus become a human being at the moment of birth? In answer to this question the doctor said:

This seems hardly logical since this may occur at 10 weeks, 20 weeks, or 40 weeks. There is nothing magical or mystical about the passage of birth process except for its independent circulation and breathing of air.

The doctor went on to ask:

Is the foetus human when the mother can feel it kick and move? This is a very subjective assessment and would vary from mother to mother and we know scientifically that the foetus can move and react to pain long before the mother is aware of its presence.

The next question the doctor asked was:

Is the foetus human at the period of viability? The problem here is that the period of viability is changing continually. At present it is usually assessed at about 20 weeks gestation. However, obviously as medical science advances, this period will become much earlier and it is also possible in the future that the foetus could be maintained outside of the mother from the very earliest weeks of gestation. Thus, again, we are on slippery ground in attempting to award the quality of being a human being at the period of viability.

Does the fact that the foetus can cry after delivery, before viability, make it human? It is interesting to note the extreme reactions of people to the concept of the foetus crying after an abortion.

● (4:00 p.m.)

He is speaking here about abortions which take place prior to three months of pregnancy. Scientific evidence indicates that the foetus is living well before the time at which most abortions are carried out. Dr. de Veber continued:

Very few doctors who perform therapeutic abortions find it a pleasant task. Many of them have stated they realize they are destroying a human life with the operation.

[Mr. Cafik.]

I go on to quote from evidence by Dr. Jack Walters who is a professor of obstetrics at the University of Western Ontario. He says:

The definition of human life depends on the finding of certain factors characteristic of life as opposed to death. The factors are: 1. Heartbeat. 2. Blood pressure. 3. Maintenance of body temperature. 4. Production of carbon dioxide. 5. Utilization of oxygen. 6. Respiratory activity.

In Stockholm, Sweden, experiments were conducted on aborted children. I wish to quote the results of these experiments:

The recording of the data concerning these aborted fetuses should demonstrate to anyone that life is present at this stage of development. The foetus has a heartbeat, produces an electrocardiographic pattern, utilizes oxygen, produces carbon dioxide and maintains body temperature.

Utilizing what is called the Doppler effect, heartbeats have been recorded in fetuses nine weeks of age.

This kind of evidence certainly leads me to believe that the foetus is in fact a human being. And if it is, what right have we to authorize some other person to take its life? I think there are situations in which this could be permitted. There is, I believe, a longstanding argument that a person has the right to protect his or her own life—the right of self-defence. This argument would justify an amendment to the Criminal Code allowing a mother to abort if her own life is, in fact, directly in danger. On the basis of this principle I believe most people would grant the right to an abortion in cases where life was endangered by the continuation of pregnancy.

In what other circumstances could we possibly permit an abortion? Bill C-150 as presently drafted says that, in the opinion of the committee set up to consider these things, an abortion could be carried out provided the continuation of the pregnancy would, or would likely, endanger life or health. The problem here lies in the definition of the word "health". Does it mean, as many would interpret it, merely a matter of convenience? Can abortions be allowed when the mother finds it discomfoting to have an other child. Perhaps when she has four or five already, perhaps when the home is not large enough, or possibly when a girl is unmarried and social pressures are brought to bear upon her, producing mental attitudes which cause her to seek an abortion?

If we allow abortion for reasons of this sort, Mr. Speaker, we are surely not correcting the real problems. Suppose an unmarried girl is led to seek an abortion because of the pressure of society upon her. Is the fault that