

right to speak again on the amendment to explain to what extent this could change

● (1730)

[*English*]

**Mr. Domm:** By way of clarification, the amendment as read by myself, and duly moved and seconded, was brought into the House at the request of the mover of the main motion, not to change the intent or the content of the motion, but by way of an explanation. It was to say in this motion the Member was referring to human beings. All we are asking for is that clarification by the insertion of an omission of the word "human" after "unborn". The amendment is only to explain in clear words what the intent was of the mover of the main motion. I did not expect to get into debate, but if we are into debate I hope that you would defer a negative ruling, if that is your intent, until it is opportune for the Member who is sponsoring this motion to be present in the House. All the Member wishes to do is refer to this person, this human foetus, as an unborn human being. It can still be voted down, if you so desire, at the time the main motion is placed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Table and the Chair have received this amendment and have considered it correct to be presented. I will put the question to the House. This amendment is debatable. Any Member who wishes to debate the amendment may rise and do so. Otherwise, I have to put the question. If Members do not wish to adopt the amendment at this time, it is debatable.

On debate the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy).

**Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre):** Madam Speaker, I will speak on debate. I accept that you do have the right to make that ruling. I have put forward a point of order which suggested that I have some questions on your ruling, but I will talk specifically to the amendment.

The proposal in the amendment is to insert the word "human" after the word "unborn". It seems to me that a couple of things flow from that. One is parliamentary and one is in terms of the sense of the motion. The parliamentary question is this. There is a very real possibility that once debate begins on this amendment, which in my opinion has unfortunately been introduced by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm), we will not return to debating the main subject of the motion of the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges), but we will concentrate on the one narrow point of the whole matter which is before the House. I find that regrettable.

I appeal to the Hon. Member to consider withdrawing this proposed amendment and allowing the matter to be considered on the basis of the original motion. It would certainly be open to him, as a supporter of his hon. friend, to suggest that he consider that as an amendment that might be introduced in the event that this matter were to go before a legislative committee. In order to respond after a day's debate to objections

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which were raised in the House by saying that we will change this could lead us to a situation where we might get further suggestions for change proposed in six or seven weeks when the Bill comes back for the third round, and then further changes proposed when the Bill comes back for the fourth round, to the point where the House is being asked to do the work which, in my opinion, should properly be done in committee.

If it is the opinion or the desire of the Hon. Member who proposed this motion in the first place that he wished to distract the debate in the manner that is now taking place, then I regret that. I think that is improper and an unjustified use of the time of this House.

I have been struck by the tone of debate. I have taken the opportunity to read the debate of November 21 when this matter was first broached in the House of Commons. The tone of debate was that all Members, including the Member for Grey—Simcoe, did take a somewhat balanced approach to the situation. I happen to be in disagreement with the main motion but I note, for example, that the Hon. Member proposing the motion talked about the need for contraception and education and spoke of the fact that in an ideal world abortion would not be needed. Everyone is in agreement that it is not something that we desire. A number of other Hon. Members have also put both points of view even though, like the Hon. Member for Peterborough, they wind up declaring themselves to be for rather than against the motion that is before us.

My second point is this. The question of whether the foetus is a human being is obviously very much one of the questions which has been debated by people on the side of the Right to Life movement, by people who have been advocates of choice in matters of abortion, and is an extremely difficult question. It is so difficult that even in the Province of Quebec where the population is largely Roman Catholic, it has been felt as a matter of public policy that essentially federal law should be adapted and interpreted in a way which permits relatively free access to abortion services. That is a fact.

It is an issue which even theologians have not been able to adequately resolve at what point the attribute of humanity begins. Everybody agrees that it begins at the point of birth. But whether it begins at some point before then during the course of pregnancy, at the point of conception, or at the point of inception where a man and woman decide that they would like to conceive, who knows. It is a very difficult question. That is one of the reasons why this whole matter has been left to the opinion of the individuals involved, and many people have argued that it should be. That, of course, is the majority opinion of Canadians today.

What I am trying to say is that by inserting the word "human" into this resolution as originally proposed, effectively this is thwarting what might be a decision of the courts if this resolution in the end becomes a part of the Constitution. I am hoping that this matter will not be held to the Constitution. A number of Hon. Members have argued, as I would if I were speaking on the main motion, that it is wrong to put this matter into the constitutional forum when it has been admitted