

Criminal Code

Incidentally, I would like to quote an excerpt of a file concerning therapeutic abortion, and drafted by the organized medical staff of the Laval Hospital, one of the most famous hospitals in Canada, formerly specialized in treating tuberculosis and now dealing with heart disease and others. There is the quotation:

On the other hand, Mr. Roy Hefferman, a famous American obstetrician declares that doctors who perform a therapeutic abortion are either ignoring the modern methods of treating pregnancy complications or do not bother to waste their time applying them. The inefficiency of therapeutic abortion is demonstrated, besides, by an American study which shows that out of 1,600,000 deliveries, the mortality rate is of 0.98 for 1,000 in hospitals where it is performed and of 0.87 for 1,000 in the hospitals where it is forbidden.

Considering the progress of science for the past decade, the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code are not justified, in my opinion. Today we are in a better position to treat some diseases. In the next few years, we shall witness even more important developments in science and the cases where it might be necessary to perform a therapeutic abortion will seldom occur.

Mr. Fortin: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it is my duty to take part in this debate on abortion on which deal amendments Nos. 21, 22, 23, 31, 39, 40 and 41, that the Chair has grouped together for a more orderly discussion.

Mr. Speaker, having read the amendments which I have just listed as well as the omnibus bill itself, especially clauses 14 and 15 which deal with abortion, we find the bill very "weak".

When one takes the time to go carefully over the very few speeches made in favour of abortion, one realize the weakness of the reasoning which tends to legalize abortion as proposed in this bill.

I think we are forgetting some basic facts while discussing this famous omnibus bill and more particularly the clause on abortion.

Mr. Speaker, it is clearly established one cannot put aside this basic principle, this great truth, that birth is not the beginning of a human life but one of its stages.

Mr. Speaker, it is clearly acknowledged by every intelligent being that birth is only the answer to nine long months of expectation. Birth is really but a coming out into the world which has been prepared by the mother, the father and the child in the womb of his mother during nine months.

Everybody admits, Mr. Speaker, that the fetus in the womb of his mother has got life.

[Mr. Rodrigue.]

The scientific knowledge available to us in 1969 allows us to believe that foetal life exists. The fact is of course recognized by everybody.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, childbirth is not the beginning of life but only a stage in life. This stage is really minor importance really, since what is most important is precisely the birth or the progress of life in the mother's womb.

[English]

• (5:10 p.m.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I recognize the Minister of Justice on a point of order.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect to the hon. member who has the floor, we are debating a fairly narrow amendment which is related to whether a hospital shall be obliged to establish a therapeutic abortion committee, etc. The general philosophy of the subject should be left to amendment No. 19 which deals with the deletion of clause 18. Here we are dealing with a specific point and perhaps Your Honour might suggest that the hon. member should confine his remarks to that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. As the Minister of Justice suggests, we are dealing with a specific amendment and subamendment, and the debate ought to be confined as much as possible to that amendment and subamendment. I may also say that sometimes it is difficult for the Chair to restrict debate. It is impossible sometimes to prevent hon. members from expressing opinions or viewpoints which may go beyond the strict framework of the amendment being considered. Nevertheless I suggest to the hon. member for Lotbinière that he should try as much as possible to confine his remarks to the amendment and subamendment now before us.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, with all respect, this time I cannot accept the remarks addressed to me through you by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner). I think he is going too far.

Mr. Speaker, we are not dealing with trucks, asphalt, etc. but with the life or death of a child who will decide about that? A therapeutic committee. Now before knowing whether to be for or against an amendment, or for or against a therapeutic committee, one must know first on what we legislate. I feel,