

Criminal Code

even if in so agreeing I had to overcome any moral scruples I might have. It should be noted that the legislation is not mandatory, but permissive. Nobody will be forced to have an abortion.

I find difficulty in accepting the concept of legalized abortion, which I consider murder. I argued, when arguing for the abolition of capital punishment, that human life was sacred. Science has demonstrated that there is no abrupt beginning or ending of human life. When conception has taken place life has begun. If the process begun is not disturbed a baby will eventually be born. In other words, if the normal process of life after conception is allowed to continue, a child will be born. Anything that destroys the continuity of what has taken place will destroy life.

Science has demonstrated the conditions under which the human race exists. We live within a fairly narrow range of temperatures under precise climatic conditions. We must breathe oxygen. If you destroy any of the factors making up the conditions under which I live, I will die. For instance, if you cut off my oxygen supply I will die. If you destroy the conditions under which the foetus may live, you kill it. I think there is a clear analogy between the two examples I have raised.

My opinion is that when we are dealing with abortion we are dealing with the taking of human life, which is murder. It would be easy for me to end my remarks on this note, but I do not think that would be fair to me or anyone else. As I said before, the government's argument is that the abortion section is not enforceable and that the law with regard to it is breaking down. That consideration must weight heavily with the cabinet which is charged with the responsibility of governing this country. As a private member, no such responsibility rests on me and it will be possible for me to vote against this clause during the debate on the report stage. At present I have not made up my mind, but my inclination now is to vote against this amendment.

Mr. Woolliams: Don't worry; you will be whipped into shape.

Mr. Reid: If no additional evidence is brought before the committee to change my mind, I shall be bound, in all conscience, to vote against this clause.

I now wish to talk about the definition of life and death; particularly, I wish to talk about death. A series of heart transplants has taken place during the last two or three years, as a result of which we have had to

redefine death. At one time it was said death ensued after the heart stopped beating. Now, it has been defined as the moment when the electroencephalographic or chemical waves cease within the brain. The latter definition is most important since many old people in hospitals show no signs of brain activity yet are kept alive by modern medical methods. Since the Minister of Justice has said that another reform to the Criminal Code will be brought forward, I suggest these points might be considered in that amendment.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the Criminal Code now before the house have been extensively debated. It is not my intention to repeat points that have already been discussed adequately. However, there are some points I wish to discuss further at this time.

The Criminal Code deals with many areas of the functioning of society and legislates with respect to problems that develop in the interrelationships of people. It touches many matters that involve deeply held views on morals, ethics and social philosophy. This was attested to by the great volume of mail received by most hon. members.

In common with other hon. members, I received a large volume of mail on many aspects of the Criminal Code. Much of my mail was from people expressing an individual point of view. They presented those views in a straightforward manner. Some of the mail was the product of organized campaigns, either in the form of petitions or in the form of a series of letters. This is a legitimate means of expression. I might say that, with few exceptions, my mail was free of undue or unwarranted pressure.

A matter of considerable interest to me in recent years has been legislation with respect to impaired driving. I witnessed the aftermaths of a few catastrophic accidents in which there were indications that one of the drivers involved was impaired because of alcohol. Such events leave a lasting impact on one's mind. I expect hon. members who have had similar experiences appreciate that. I am in favour of a fairly tough line on impaired driving cases and am happy to see the 0.08 per cent blood alcohol level included in the legislation. Experience in many jurisdictions shows that this figure with respect to blood alcohol represents a turning point in one's ability to control a vehicle.

● (8:50 p.m.)

At the same time, I must say that I am not technically qualified to judge the adequacy of