

is closer to 800, not 116. The whole hypocritical sham that has developed around this subject needs correction.

One of the reasons we come to the House to debate the subject, no matter which side of the argument we support, is to get to the question of finally resolving the issue. One of the ways is to establish more therapeutic abortion committees, but another way—and it seems to me the only one that ultimately will be satisfactory—is to remove the subject from the Criminal Code and allow a person to follow the dictates of his or her conscience on this subject. This is not a matter of abortion on demand—that is a ridiculous claim—it is a matter of the conscience of the individual in possession of professional advice. I see no reason why that should not be consistent with anybody's view on the right to life. It is certainly consistent with decency and humanity.

I should like to quote a colleague of mine who is no longer in the House but who is a well respected former member, Mrs. Grace MacInnis, who spoke in the minority parliament on July 6, 1973, on this subject. This is what she said:

But like our own Dr. Morgentaler they have found themselves unable to wash their hands of the matter and piously leave women to suffer the tortures and dangers of a pregnancy which they did not want, for which they were only partly responsible, and which, in far too many cases, they did not know how to prevent.

This is the reality and the hypocrisy of the whole matter of keeping abortion in the Criminal Code. This is where the injustice lies. I have tried to keep my remarks in low key, without touching on those horrors so often depicted graphically and in words when this matter is discussed.

I have tried to do that also. I do not think this very legitimate debate is enhanced with pictures of deceased women in morgues, or pictures of fetuses. I think that does nothing to rationalism in the debate. I respect views on the right to live and I recognize the concern that many people have that if life is taken, even in its growing form within the womb, if it is taken lightly we may have less respect for it. But there are no absolutes in this and women have a right not to be discriminated against in this one area where in vast parts of our country abortion is not available. Canada has one of the lowest abortion rates in the world. Those are things we should not forget.

Madam Speaker, I see my time is running out. However, I want to give credit to the Minister of Justice for one thing, that is that his position has apparently changed. In his latest memorandum of February 26, 1975, he departed very significantly from the position he had taken previously in advising hospitals, particularly those under his jurisdiction, that social and economic conditions were not to be considered in the decision whether to perform an abortion. In his last memorandum he stated:

For our part, it is clear that the justification for killing a fetus which parliament wrote into the law is one of health and life and that it is best to leave that judgement to experts. If medical committees will accept the responsibility and endeavour seriously to determine if the grounds set out by parliament are present, then the law will operate as intended.

I can live with that as a statement of the minister's responsibility. But it is a far, far cry from his conduct at the time when debate developed in the House between the minister and members of the opposition, when previous statements by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Finance were put to him. So I am pleased to

Abortion

see that there is a change. Nevertheless, it is a very deep responsibility that the Minister of Justice bears in the conduct of his office. During the period when he wrote the memorandum, when he attempted to stop grants to women's groups because of his suspicion that they may have been referring some of the women they were counselling to places where they could obtain abortions, there was an abuse of the minister's office, I submit.

We cannot use confidentiality to hide behind as a cloak with respect to what is fundamentally the government's responsibility, that is, to let the public know what has been happening on the abortion issue across the country and see how the Minister of Justice has been administering his portfolio. I urge, Madam Speaker, that the minister be required to table this correspondence so we can determine whether some of the things that I have read today are confirmation of the minister imposing his own interpretation of the Criminal Code on the attorneys general of this country.

Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (York South): Madam Speaker, I find it incongruous and infinitely sad that we should have listened to a speech in defence of somebody who is a self-admitted criminal. Dr. Morgentaler admitted that he had aborted women. The salient question he asked was whether they had enough money to pay him. These are the facts that came out in the transcript of the trial. Yet the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) is accused of hiding behind government confidentiality. We heard words such as "suspicion".

Questions such as whether the minister is carrying out his responsibility as Minister of Justice are being asked. Our Minister of Justice is being almost impeached in the House of Commons for carrying out his duty and defending the people of Canada. It is sad to see attempts at impeaching him when a known criminal is offered an award as a humanitarian. It may be a sign of what this society of ours is coming to. I should like to quote from an editorial which appeared in the *Toronto Star* of Wednesday, May 28, under the title "Signals of social breakdown". It reads:

In Canada there's a growing fear of social and political breakdown . . . The danger is that an individual may think he can disregard the rules he doesn't like, and get away with it. But when everyone—groups, organizations and unions—

And, I may add, abortionists.

—does the same, it's destructive to society as a whole.

I understand the role of the Minister of Justice. His role is to make sure that justice is administered to all Canadians, to all humans. I submit that humanity starts at the moment of conception. Therefore, I am convinced that the Minister of Justice would be remiss in his job if he did not protect the weakest. And what is weaker than an unborn child?

● (1720)

We have been told that Dr. Morgentaler had great courage. We have been told that our Minister of Justice has been hiding. I think the hon. member wanted to give the minister a chance to defend himself. Quite frankly, I know of no other minister in the present cabinet who has so ably and so often defended himself both in this House and