

I believe that the legalization of abortion on demand, if it is not reversed, will some day be looked upon by historians as the last turning point of our materialistic society in abandoning the advantages that came to our society from a Christian-Judaeo heritage in favour of a change in our culture where an unreal concern about materialism and personal freedom replaced our traditional view of the sanctity of life. I am afraid that it takes almost nothing to move from abortion, which is the killing of an unborn baby, to the killing of the retarded, the crippled, the sick, and the elderly. We have to show leadership in returning our society to the belief that the highest level of culture is when we protect the sanctity of human life.

Great nations in which freedom and justice have governed the affairs of the people have upheld this principle. This principle is the bedrock of our civilization. It is a principle which has distinguished free and democratic systems. When the moral foundations of our country are being shaken as they are now, it is time for us to act. I think that just as ancient Rome and other nations have died when they ceased to live by great principles, so can we.

Our choice is clear. We have to believe that we have the power to overcome the pro-abortion decision which was recently taken because of the Supreme Court action. I believe we have to do this since no nation can survive if it abandons natural moral leadership and embraces a doctrine of death. Some of my colleagues who have already spoken earlier today have moved true pro-life amendments and I look forward to supporting those amendments.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, the subject of this motion and the amendments proposed concern an issue which, in the words of *The Ottawa Citizen* editorial of Monday of this week "no Government can settle easily and uncontroversially. It is a question of feeling and faith more than logic and science, and divisions must surely cut across all Party lines". I would like to say at the outset that the vast majority of my constituents, like most Canadians, are opposed to abortion on demand, and with this position I agree. I could not, as a matter of conscience, vote for any proposal that would allow for a termination of pregnancy simply upon request. Yet that is the present situation in Canada as a result of the Morgentaler decision rendered in January of this year.

The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the old law as being inconsistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the majority of judges having found that Section 251 of the Criminal Code deprived a pregnant woman of the right to security of person under Section 7 of the Charter. We are, of course, aware that the Borowski case will soon be heard by the Supreme Court. Presumably, the justices will take that opportunity to define the rights of the unborn human. Pending that decision, and given the significance of the Charter, Parliament, in a very real sense, is left in limbo. That is why I commend the Government for bringing forward this debate to enable individual Members of Parliament to

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express their positions and ultimately to seek consensus on the preferred direction legislation might take.

This issue touches in the most profound way the absolute fundamentals of an individual's concept of life itself. It is the kind of issue that Members will decide freely, without Party discipline and irrespective of the representations of lobby groups, but Members will answer to their constituents. In this regard, I disagree with Edmund Burke. I believe that where there is a clear-cut expression of opinion within a constituency, under the circumstances of a free vote each Member ought to respect the wishes of the majority of his constituents.

Back in early 1985 I included an abortion questionnaire to be inserted in a householder and received over 1,500 responses at a time when this issue was not on the front burner. Some 80 per cent of my constituents rejected the idea of abortion on demand. Seventy-seven per cent felt that the law should give rights to the unborn child, and abortion was rejected in all situations other than where there was an imminent threat to the mother's life. With this direction, last year I voted in favour of the private Member's Bill put forward by the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) which sought to afford to the unborn human protection under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Recently, after the Supreme Court of Canada decision on Morgentaler, I canvassed my constituents on the basis of three possible courses of action: first, to permit abortions only where the mother's life or physical health was in danger; second, to permit abortion without restriction; and, third, to permit abortion without restrictions during the first 16 weeks of pregnancy and thereafter only when the mother's life or physical health was in danger. Sixty-four per cent of my constituents chose option one. Only 9 per cent chose option two and 24 per cent chose option three. A clear majority of people in my riding believe that abortion should only be allowed if the mother's life or physical health is in danger. Most important, 68 per cent of women supported this position as compared to 59 per cent of the men. Given that this subject has been termed by some as a woman's issue, I regard this feminine response as most significant.

On many occasions when responding to constituents, I have indicated that I am against abortion on demand, that I am against free-standing abortion clinics, and that it would be my intention to support legislation that best restricts abortion to situations wherein the life of the mother is endangered. I have not always held these views. These are views which have evolved over a considerable period of time.

This debate obliges us to ask ourselves difficult questions. When does life begin? What is the nature of human life? What is the value of the individual? Who should choose between the life of a woman and her child? Does a woman's individual freedom override the life of an unborn human? What is the role of the state in all of this? The abortion