

Government Orders

Given the criteria proposed in the bill, are women going to be going into doctors' offices because they want an abortion, whether it is on economic grounds or on any grounds, and telling fibs, little white lies so that they can beat the game, beat the criteria and have the abortion that they want? If that is the case, that is very disturbing. A woman, it seems to me, should be able to come to this issue honestly, forthrightly and ask her doctor whether she can have one without resorting to fibs. Could the hon. member answer that question.

Mr. Karpoff: In the main part of my speech, I raised that as one of the real issues. A woman is going to have to present her circumstances in a particular frame of reference. She is going to have to be less than forthright with her doctor. A couple of things that I said about it was that it will destroy the doctor/patient relationship. It will also detract from the dignity of that woman. It forces her into being less than forthright. I know that most women when they are presented with that will find ways of presenting their situation in a manner that the doctor is not going to be able to make any decision.

When I was working in social work, administrators would say to me that this is what the policy says. I would say that you cannot give me a policy where I cannot take an individual case and force you to make an exception to that policy because I present the facts of the case.

My concern is that disadvantaged women are often the ones who are not sophisticated in law. They do not know what the legislation says. They are maybe not as articulate as some woman lawyer going in and asking. They are not as experienced in dealing with a medical person. They are not going to present their situation in a manner that is going to allow the doctor to form an opinion that an abortion is warranted.

This is particularly true of young women. What 15 year old will understand the subtleties of this legislation, that she has got to say not that this may be detrimental to her health, but threatening to her health? There is quite a difference between what is detrimental and what is threatening. Could she understand what is psychological health or mental health? She may consciously try to present that situation. Yes, there is going to be dishonesty. More important, it is going to deny women the right to have an abortion who should have that right. A 15 year

old girl should not be forced to lie to her doctor in order to get an abortion.

Mrs. Dobbie: I would just like to ask the member why he thinks a woman would not be able to consult a second doctor to get a second opinion. The legislation, in my opinion, does nothing to bar a woman from seeking a second opinion, and seeking the services of another doctor if the first doctor she consults does not agree that the abortion is necessary.

Mr. Karpoff: Let us take the case of the 15 year old girl. If she goes to six doctors in a row, she is still 15. If the doctors apply this legislation the way it is intended, she will not get an abortion. If I was a doctor and a woman went to one doctor and he said there is no medical ground, her health is not being threatened, I would be very leery to then perform an abortion because one doctor has already expressed an opinion under which I could be criminally charged. The doctor has already expressed that opinion by refusing to do the abortion on the basis that there are no medical grounds. That will happen. Any people who think that that is not going to happen are kidding themselves. Some people are thinking that the doctor and the woman are going to go quietly in the corner and wink at each other and then perform the abortion on demand. That is not what is going to happen.

• (1700)

Ms. Black: I would like to thank my colleague for Surrey North for his comments today. I know that he worked a long time in the social services field in British Columbia and had experiences with women in British Columbia before there was any access to abortion that were very painful for him to witness as a social worker. I know that his comments came from his experience in that area. I know that his comments were from his heart and were, in some cases, very painful for him to bring forward in this place today.

I want to ask him to comment specifically, on young girls, children who are having children. We know from statistics that Stats Canada provides for us that there are almost 50,000 children in care in Canada. The majority of these kids have come from poor families, families that in many cases are below the poverty line.

I wonder if my colleague could address some of the reasons that this criminal legislation is particularly wrong