

*Abortion*

There is no family policy in Canada, and this causes a lot of hardship. To support free choice, we must have services. We need clinics providing termination of pregnancies and services to help women who want to continue their pregnancy, as well as education services and follow-ups. I quite agree with several Members who said: there are clinics where women have abortions, after which they go home and we do not know what happens to them afterwards. There should be follow-ups to provide support services to all the women who get an abortion. First, to avoid re-occurrences, and second, to check on their psychological state. There is nothing like that at this time.

Teenage pregnancies have reached epidemic proportions in Canada. As I recall, teenagers account for 34 out of every 1,000 pregnancies in Alberta. Naturally, there is no sex or contraception education program.

I have been listening to my colleagues since 3 p.m. this afternoon, and I have found that Members generally confuse two different concepts, the right of the mother and the right of the unborn child. I believe that we should have a Bill which takes both concepts into account. It is not the case now. We have a motion which does not solve anything.

It is rather strange to hear Members tell us that women do not have the right to make the decision when we are given the responsibility to raise our children. Women are given custody of the children in case of separation or divorce, but we are denied the right to decide whether to continue a pregnancy or not. We are given responsibilities, but denied the right of decision.

From what we hear, women are no longer having children. Many will say that it is because of abortion. However, Mr. Speaker, it is not because of abortion, but because of our economic system and the economic position of women. I believe that this is the major responsibility.

We also have to remember the ruling of the Supreme Court which speaks about human dignity for women. As I said earlier, I know that the majority of my colleagues have not read the ruling of the Supreme Court, and I shall therefore conclude my speech by reading a few passages from that ruling. When the court speaks about the human dignity on which the Charter is based, it is referring to the right to make fundamental personal decisions without interference from the state. This is a crucial component of the right to freedom. Mr. Speaker, in a free and democratic society, the right to freedom does not require the state to approve the personal decisions of its citizens. However, it requires the state to respect these decisions.

In addition, the right to freedom provided in section 7 guarantees for each individual some personal autonomy about the major decisions affecting his private life.

More recently, and this is still in the ruling of the Supreme Court which I would have liked my male colleagues to read, the fight for recognition of women's rights has been a fight against discrimination so that women would find a place in a man's world, to develop a package of legislative reforms to put women on an equal footing with men. We are not struggling here to define the rights of women in relation to their particular position in the social structure or in relation to the biological difference between the sexes. The sole form taken by the needs and aspirations of women today is that of guaranteed rights. The right to reproduce or not to reproduce is one of those rights, and it is rightly considered an integral part of the contemporary fight by women to affirm their dignity and value as human beings.

I would also like to summarize briefly what the Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Beetz point out, that is, that the existing legislative structure for obtaining an abortion plainly "subjects women to considerable emotional stress and unnecessary physical risk." And then they add that in their view the existing legislative structure "is more deeply flawed" than that. Essentially what it does is assert "that the woman's capacity to reproduce is to be subject not to her own control but to that of the state." She is not to be allowed to choose to exercise that capacity or not. In my opinion, this not only violates her right to liberty, in the sense of her right, her personal autonomy in decision-making, it is also "a direct interference with her physical person".

How can a woman in that situation have the slightest feeling of security about her person? And the justices conclude by saying that they consider that Section 251 of the Criminal Code deprives the pregnant woman both of her right to security of the person and of her right to liberty.

Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to see my colleagues in the House of Commons approach this motion bearing in mind what the Supreme Court ruling says. I think women must make themselves respected. It's very nice to want to respect the unborn child, but we live a daily reality where women are always there, and obviously they tend to get forgotten. They are inconvenient, because they speak out and demand things.

So I just want to say that I will vote against the motion because it does not respect the liberty or the human dignity of women, and also I hope that one day the Government will assume its responsibilities and table a Bill in which there will be a balance between the rights of the mother and the rights of the unborn child, and in which there will be provision for services such as education, contraception, and support for the mothers who want to continue their pregnancies as well as for those who want to interrupt them, because I must say that a motion like this one is in my view an abdication on the Government's part and a step backward.