

An hon. member: There is nothing like an objective opinion.

Mr. Waddell: I will just read part of the book at page 313 to show what it talks about. It says:

The right-to-life movement argues: If euthanasia is permitted in limited ways today, however tightly controlled by law, what is to stop groups and/or governments in the future from taking things a step further and introducing compulsory death for, say, the burdensome, the poor, the handicapped, the sick, and the elderly? Also, they argue, the availability of euthanasia as a lawfully and socially acceptable release will inevitably make it a duty for those old people who have "served their purpose" to die. The right to die becomes an obligation to die. Lastly, euthanasia laws could be manipulated by unscrupulous individuals to eliminate the sick/elderly who are a burden, especially if they have money to bequeath.

Then it continues:

Countering this, right-to-die advocates claim that the rule of the law has no purpose if society cannot, by and large, enforce it. Those who misuse euthanasia laws will merit punishment as for any other crime. Where is the sense, they argue, in telling a person dying of throat cancer that euthanasia cannot be made available because Nazi Germany murdered thousands of people in the 1940s using a method labelled "euthanasia"? The lessons of history are there to be learned, and the Nazi experience has taught society how not to let government slip into the hands of an irresponsible minority.

I am not going to go into all of this tonight because I do not have the time. I anticipate that the debate will discuss the pros and the cons. However, I am trying to set the tone of the debate. The *status quo* is unacceptable. I suspect that physician and other-assisted suicide is going on in the country right now. This question should not be dealt with by the courts on a case-to-case basis. Just think of the poor patients. Not only are they terminally ill but they must find the energy to raise the money, instruct the lawyers, face the questions and so on. That is a pretty awful situation.

This is essentially a non-partisan issue in terms of the tone of the debate, although partisan in that people have many different viewpoints. I hope that all members of the House will be free to vote following their own beliefs and understandings of the issue. In other words, I hope there is a free vote on the issue.

The World Health Organization uses a holistic definition of health which includes its spiritual, emotional, family, environmental and physical aspects.

Canadians want to be active participants in their own health care so the issue of quality of life has come to the

Private Members' Business

forefront of Canadian consciousness. The flip side is the quality of our death, which makes us face the issue of euthanasia. These are hard issues to face.

Surely someone who wants to end their life with dignity and cannot do so because of the nature of their illness, as in the Rodriguez case, should have the right to make that choice. Of course there must be controls to make sure that the choice is not taken advantage of. Legislation, if written, must be carefully crafted to prevent abuse but the principle stands.

This motion says that if there is a clear reasoned choice then in law that should be respected and those who assist the person in carrying out that choice should be protected. This is a very important debate in the House. Yes, there are other issues such as unemployment and all kinds of other issues. Yes, as a Parliament we have to pursue them.

David Suzuki, from Vancouver, said that politicians in the future will be measured in terms of their ability to deal with the more complex questions and the public wants us to do that. That is why it should ultimately be done here and not ultimately in the courts.

I also feel on reading the material on this matter and hearing other debate that the public is concerned about this issue because it is well aware that medical technology has changed. In their own lives people are well aware of some family member, some relative, some neighbour, or some friend who has been terminally ill, has suffered for a long time and has been kept alive by the new technology. Perhaps dignity was not there in their death. They are afraid. We are all afraid of death. We are all afraid that we might have to face the same situation. That is why it is important to clarify the matter.

My motion states, and I repeat it:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of introducing legislation on the subject of euthanasia—

I worded that very carefully, "should consider the advisability"—

—and, in particular, of ensuring that those assisting terminally-ill patients who wish to die not be subject to criminal liability.

That directs the government. That is not the *status quo*, and that is probably what the vote will be on in the House if the vote comes to the House. Members will