

Private Members' Business

and my wife said to me: "Your father has been in the hospital for the last three days and you should go down and see him". I said: "Well, when you say it like that there must be something serious going on here". She said: "He is not well".

From the tone of her voice I knew that something was up and so I rushed right away to St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and I walked into the room. My father was a very young man, more like a brother than a father to me for most of our relationship. I said: "Well, Dad, what's up?" He said: "I have three months to live". He had lung cancer. After I asked him, in moments of frustration, if he had examined all the options—there are great doctors and great research in this country and in the United States—he said: "Listen, while you have been away I have gone through all of this. The prognosis is that I have 90 days, maximum 120".

After a couple of hours of real bitterness and frustration on my part I then went through an experience in which over the next 90 days I watched my father die. He moved from his home in the country, from the farm, into our home, into my own bedroom, for about 60 days before we moved him into the palliative care unit at St. Mike's. I believe that those days, not only for him but for me and many others around him, were very special moments even though we knew his life was coming to an end.

• (1120)

The first reaction by those of us who are not suffering is obviously one of care and compassion for the person. We do not want them to continue suffering, and naturally we do not want to be someone who is promoting that. That is not where I am coming from.

I believe that life, even in its most painful form and at its loneliest moment, is something precious and meaningful and not for us to make a judgment on as to when it should end, especially when the judgment is to be made by someone who in his or her natural state is low and in pain.

The last hours in the personal experience I had were very meaningful to my father who was in pain. Today we have lots of medication and support systems, but even those last hours were precious and meaningful. Had we co-operated in perhaps a moment of weakness on his part when he might have said he wanted his life to end today or next week, we would have denied him a joy that

he experienced right to the end. I certainly know we all experienced that joy.

I hear this from many other people who have had similar experiences. It is not that we do not have compassion for a person who is suffering. It is not that we do not care about a person who is suffering. Viktor Frankl is probably one of the best psychiatrists in the world. He developed a therapy called logotherapy where one can develop a meaning and a satisfaction at that most desperate moment in one's life. Somehow we should be putting more support, more time and more energies into that type of support system for a person who is facing the prognosis of death, of eternity.

For that reason, the reason being that life for me is precious and should be supported with all the forces and energies we have, we should not be the ones who support an interruption of it. For that reason I cannot support this bill.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to stand for a few minutes to offer some comments on this issue. I commend the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for bringing it before the House.

It is an issue about which Canadians will have to give an awful lot of thought over the next few months and indeed few years. I am sure my hon. friend in bringing the issue forward has done so because he has a great interest in justice issues as well as moral issues. This issue has been brought before the public recently by the Rodriguez case in British Columbia. That may or may not have stimulated my hon. friend to bring forward his motion, but I notice he spoke to that case in his remarks. We are also mindful of the case in Quebec a year ago.

The issue in my judgment is a very complicated one. There are a lot of issues, moral and otherwise, connected to it. Members will no doubt speak to that.

• (1125)

I am not sure in my own mind that there has been a lot of public discussion about this issue. When there is an emotional news story it captures public attention for a period of time and then goes away. Sometimes it leads to the kind of serious debate now before Parliament on this very controversial subject. Sometimes the story comes, goes, passes and is forgotten.