

Criminal Code

Mr. Speaker: I draw to the attention of the hon. member for Shefford that what we are discussing now is not a debate, but an amendment moved by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

● (9:40 p.m.)

Mr. Rondeau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I said that we were getting hot under the collar because it seems the hon. minister and his government do not want to admit that anyone of our amendments is logical. We want the arguments we have been putting forward to remain in the records of this Parliament so that we shall be able to say that we have foreseen the odious effects of this bill, and that we, at least, have not let the bill pass without saying a word in protest.

Mr. Speaker, some members do not seem to be able to determine when life begins. What is a human being?

I would like to base my remarks on a book which was published by the federal government and made available to Canadian mothers—I did not say “mayors” but “mothers”. The title is “The Canadian mother and her child”. At page 24, we read, and I quote:

When one of the spermatozoa and the ovum meet and unite, a new life begins.

On the government side of the house, they tell us that life begins when the child is born or when it is 4 months old. However, doctors have proved during the hearings of the committee that there is no doubt—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wish to remind again the hon. member that he must address himself to the amendment before us. The hon. member says that it is important to air his views and those of his colleagues on the subject. Under the present circumstances, we are only studying an amendment proposed by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

It seems to me the argument submitted by the hon. member for Shefford goes somewhat beyond the narrow limits of the discussion and therefore I am asking him after he has completed his introductory remarks, to address himself to the question before us.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank you once again for your usual kindness, and because of it, I shall try to restrict myself to the amendment before us, dealing with the health of the mother when it is endangered.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) wondered when life began.

[Mr. Rondeau.]

In support of my argument, I referred to the above-mentioned to prove that today, there is no doubt about it, even in the house, or in the books that the federal government makes available our Canadian women.

It is strange to find that on the opposite side they do not seem to want to put forward the arguments of our scientists or medical associations who, regarding the proposed amendments have given us very good suggestions.

As far as I am concerned, I shall not be able to vote for the amendment moved this afternoon by the hon. member for Ontario, because that would mean we are in favour of abortion.

Since the beginning of the fight we are putting up in the house, we cannot accept the arguments concerning the threat to the life of the mother, because Quebec or Canadian doctors are not quite sure that if the abortion is not carried out, the life of the mother will be endangered.

Now, we cannot accept the argument of life against health, that is to say that to protect the mother's health, we have to kill the foetus. Such arguments do not weigh enough in the balance and are not sufficient to convince us of the worth of that amendment.

That is the reason why I shall abstain from voting for or against that amendment, because from now on we will recognize that abortion should be procured in Canada, in some cases, to protect the life or health of the mother.

Mr. Speaker, in this house, some hon. members have quoted various authorities, but the major part of their evidence has been put aside by the Association of the medical practitioners of the Hôpital Laval in Quebec, whose representative told us the following, and I quote:

Any abortion is homicidal, for the foetus is a human being.

Here, in the amending bill, that fact does not seem to be acknowledged. And I continue the quotation:

Some allege that the foetus is not a human being as long as it is not viable. Now, the notion of viability of the foetus outside the mother's womb is dependent upon medical knowledge. At the present time, we consider that the foetus is viable outside the mother's womb, in practice, only from the twenty-eighth week of gestation (that is to say when its weight reaches 1000 grams); however, that period might be reduced through acquisition of new knowledge and the elaboration of proper techniques. The viability outside the mother's womb actually depends on