

*Criminal Code*

Mr. Speaker, when the committee on health, welfare and social affairs sat in 1967, many doctors, many specialists, could have discussed at least as long as we have on the definition of the word "health".

We must realize that if numerous doctors, who know what they speak of, and numerous specialists do not agree on the meaning that should be given to the word "health", especially with regard to abortion, how are intentions ever to be justified, even the best of them?

There is only one possible solution, the only one on which we should have dwelt: to amend the Criminal Code in such a way that the doctor who, because of his diagnosis, must treat his patient in such a way that it finally leads to abortion cannot be prosecuted under the law.

If ever, following the treatment which he gives the patient who is really ill, he decides to perform an abortion, it is because the doctors or the hospital wanted it that way.

That is why when we see the extremely broad meaning that they want to give—I will be told that it is not, in fact, broad, that it has indeed a lot of good sense, life and health—we know, of course, that there are millions of people who are ready to broaden the meaning of the little word, and who are ready to extend it in such a way that inevitably, as all those who lived through the same experience—I mean here all the countries that had the same experience—and that we will automatically reach abortion on request.

That is what some people foresee and that is why we are asked to be far more precise in regulating abortion. We are requesting for tighter regulations. We are requesting in fact, that the doctor, the surgeon, the gynaecologist have no responsibility which they could not assume. And even the psychiatrist does not want to be compelled by all kinds of pressures coming from the patient herself, from her parents, from her family, from her neighbours and friends. The psychiatrist does not want to be confronted with this frightful problem in which he will find a patient who, in the beginning, is not at all ill, but who wears herself out slowly and surely to reach at last a real state of illness.

They do not want to have this problem on their shoulders, simply because the law is too broad, simply because the word "health" has not been defined. And I understand them, because it is very easy to understand.

And the time must come for every member in this house to understand the meaning of

[Mr. Matte.]

such findings, which are not merely those of the Ralliement créditiste as some are led to believe, because we are the ones who defend life, because that is a part of our concern about the freedom of the individual and because we do not want to impair our country's development through inadequate laws that I would go as far as to call terrible.

If we look at the series of definitions given by doctors, agencies, hospitals, we realize that the interpretation of the word "health" becomes a major problem.

And strange as it seems, hon. members do not realize that, if a group of experts cannot agree on such a meaning, we, even if we are from Matane, are not any wiser than all those people put together and cannot claim the right to decide, in a field as vital and essential as the right to live, that the foetus itself cannot defend.

And when we talk about "health", it should not necessarily have to do with illness. One may talk about good health and one may talk about health in jeopardy.

The word "health" may mean many things, and it may mean among others, to be in good health.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Motherhood, pregnancy is precisely the state, in the highest sense of the word, where we see a woman blossom, where we see a woman really in full possession of all her potentialities. It is perhaps the only occasion that a woman has to reach her maximum of fulfillment.

Mr. Speaker, I am most happy that my wife is now pregnant. I already have three children—it will then be my fourth one—and I assure you that it is an extraordinary pleasure for me to see my wife blossoming because she is pregnant.

I would like to stress the positive side. Health, it is precisely that which is health, because it is natural, and many old women and young ladies have difficulties, precisely because they have not had a taste of motherhood. They lack something to enjoy life fully.

Thus, why say that an instinctive thing, that a natural phenomenon, a really true phenomenon owing to which we are all here, is something which is connected with illness? Here we make a serious mistake. It is unfortunate that we should not insist more on the "good health" aspect of the thing and that we should linger on some very particular exceptions in which "health" could be affected