

Private Members' Business

resolution. Therefore I have no doubt the law will be changed.

• (1150)

All points of view are important in the ideas we put forward today. To me this is about freedom, self-determination and very much about fear. I appreciated the comments of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I appreciated that he personalized them. This is an issue that needs to be personalized because it affects every one of us. As an issue which affects every one of us, we need to consider it in our own context.

I can appreciate the choices that the hon. member for Calgary and the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell may have made for themselves and their families. Those choices may have been that when they face terminal illness, they want to prolong life as long as medical science can do so, even if it is prolonging life through and into intense suffering.

That is their choice for them and their families. I do not agree with that choice for me or my family. I believe that God gave us medical science and technology to improve the quality of our life, to nurture, protect and prolong to the point where we say: "That is enough, let me go, let me withdraw from treatment and leave it between my God and myself to make that decision".

We seem to have moved somewhat since we started this debate on my Bill C-203. Everyone seems to recognize fully that there should be the right to withdraw from treatment in the law to the point that we are claiming that it exists. The court cases demonstrate that it does not necessarily exist and needs clarification. The courts have called upon Parliament to clarify the law. The first result of the Rodriguez hearing told us that this is a decision for the Parliament of Canada, not a decision for the medical profession or the courts.

Let us look at what we agree to under the law. We agree, I think almost unanimously, that anyone who becomes terminally ill, that means you and I, has the right to withdraw from treatment. But we do not have the right to withdraw from suffering. In other words, technically one can withdraw from treatment if one wants to suffer to the point of death.

Mrs. Stewart: That is ridiculous.

Mr. Wenman: I am not finished yet. You are right. That is not the whole side. The practice of most caring medical professional people is that they will err on the side of relieving suffering and in so doing, on occasion or even often, will allow that life to go at the point when suffering becomes excessive.

• (1155)

I would like to see the practice made legal so that the choice is for everyone to make. If I were to become terminally ill I would want my life preserved as long as possible. I would use all the medical technology I could to extend my life. But I believe there is a point in suffering where I would want to be able to say as a mature, responsible adult: "That is enough, let me go. Help me go". I would want to use the technology available to us through medical science to let me choose to say that is enough and let me go.

It is unfortunate that this is a decision question. Who will make the decision? Will it be your doctor, will it be your family, will it be yourself or will it be God? What is the combination?

One of the problems right now is that everybody sits around the deathbed arguing about who should make the decision, or saying nothing because that is easier than arguing. It goes on and on and on. People feel great pity and empathy. They feel sad but they cannot make a decision. That is why there should be the right of the individual to make a rational, logical choice through access to medical technology which will allow us to terminate our own life when there is no further hope.

This is not just what I think, it is what the court has declared. The court has declared that it needs direction. From where? From Parliament, from here, from us. We have to overcome our fear of this subject and deal with it, and we all have that fear in varying degrees.

Some people compare it to the abortion issue. Tie it in. It has nothing to do with the abortion issue. In the case of abortion we are talking about two people's lives, the life of the child and the life of the mother. In that case it is easy for me. It is a matter of nurturing, preserving and protecting that life.