

*Criminal Code*

life as it is now, not on the basis of principles and theories but of facts. I know that this Bill No. C-150 can bring about a lot of apparent division but I do think that it is with a clash of ideas that we shall be able to enjoy in this house a greater unity since we agree on the principle but we do not seem to agree on the terms.

Actually, it is hard to understand what goes on when we want to introduce new things in Canada. We had the example of the flag and today those who were strongly opposed to it proudly wear a miniature flag on their lapels. When they travel in Europe, they are very proud of it. But think of all the speeches, of all the time it took before the adoption of an emblem which, to my mind, is essential to our national pride. Indeed, when we are abroad, what gladdens our hearts? The flag of our country floating on a mast.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

• (3:20 p.m.)

**Mr. Isabelle:** Mr. Speaker, my speech will be essentially about abortion, and I shall leave the question of guns to warriors and hunters.

I shall leave the problem of lotteries to those who know that subject better than I do.

Finally, I shall leave bingos to those who have been organizing them for so long in Canada, knowing all the time of course that they were infringing the Criminal Code. But since in Canada, as usual, the central government, as it is called, has always taken a paternalistic attitude, it looked the other way and let parishes, charitable associations and benevolent societies get rich or to fill their tills. The aim was commendable at the time, and this is why one has no right today to tell the people that an existing situation will not be recognized.

This is why I say that many things will be remembered in history, including this famous bill which, fundamentally, tends to unite Canadians and to give them a better standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, I want to limit my remarks to the abortion problem, and I will go over the history of this famous controversy from the beginning. For the information of those who fear remorse, I must say that the law—as everyone says—is permissive. It is not compulsory and this is what makes the just society. It is to allow one's conscience to do what one can do, what one wants to do, what one must do or what one thinks one should do.

[Mr. Isabelle.]

Moreover, as would say one hon. member who is an excellent lawyer, the change is not considerable in comparison with the former legislation, except that it is a little more precise. One admits that medicine exists in Canada and that it is the duty of doctors to take decisions concerning health. It is also said that it is the duty of doctors to perform these operations when the life of the pregnant mother is at stake.

This is why we speak of clarification. Indeed, there is no great change, not much is being done. The bill merely clarifies a point, and that, in essence, is what the whole chapter on abortion is about.

There has also been a great show of emotion. Some took great pleasure in using the words "life, health, woman, mother"; some even wondered whether it may not be possible for a man to give birth. That proves just how ridiculous things become when we start dissecting words. There is no single definition of health. I am not saying that there have not been several definitions of the word; I say there is no single definition on which everyone agrees. That is why the responsibility for taking that decision should be left to the medical profession.

Health is a lot of things which together make a man feel well. It is a feeling of well-being. Because a man has had both legs removed does not mean that he is not in good health. It is not the lack of something; it is a whole. So, I will not let anyone come and tell me that there is mental health on the one hand, and physical health on the other. It is true that both exist. But they cannot be considered separately. Some people are ill because they live in slums; others, because they eat or drink too much and suffer from gout, and so on and so forth. But that is not for lack of something. That is why I say that health is made up of a group of coexisting elements.

To cut short this preamble, Mr. Speaker, let me say that a few years ago, just to tackle the subject—this very old but also, paradoxically very new and modern subject of abortion—would have been a matter of high treason or, for a Catholic, a kind of apostasy. But things have changed a lot, as hon. member should know. Individuals have changed, everyone in his own way. Today, it has become possible to comment openly on any historical or other event.

That is why I feel at liberty today to deal with a subject of controversy all over the world, that of abortion. But this is something