

Birth Control Methods

much support in this field. I am sure she would not want to defeat the purposes of such investigations by a restriction that would place upon them any inhibition and thus destroy the net effect we hope to achieve.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I must first compliment the mover of the motion. It is a bilingual motion, but in spite of the fact that I have been taking lessons for some time, the meaning of some of the French words escapes me. I believe I understand the gist of the motion, but if I stray slightly from the subject I hope you, Sir, will appreciate that this is the reason.

I concur with the mover of the motion that the public should be informed. An informed public is a much more constructive and understanding public. Quite often, when governments move in particular areas and endeavour to do something, the cry goes up, "Why has it taken so long?" or, "Why are we spending so much money on it?" But when the public knows all the facts, it can understand the reasons why decisions are sometimes made that leave certain people out of programs in the interest of helping those who really need assistance.

As I look at this motion, I believe it calls for ground rules that would reverse what seems to be the present trend. Nowadays, when studies are prepared for the consideration of government the tendency is for government to want to get as comprehensive, factual, honest and true reports as possible. Preparation of these reports should not be inhibited by a requirement that they be disclosed perhaps prematurely. Publication of reports out of context may damage the kind of reports that should be made to government. As the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) has said, premature disclosure might have an inhibiting effect. As has also been mentioned, Mr. Speaker, sometimes five or six reports are considered together before conclusions are reached. If an individual had only one report available to him and based his total argument on that, he might mislead the public and to great disservice.

When I look at the title of the report mentioned in the motion of the hon. member, I think I must agree with her that there is no reason under heaven why its contents should not be revealed. On the face of it, just reading the title, it seems to be innocuous and not something that will damage public morality. Apparently government members who have read the report have decided otherwise. I shall be interested in hearing other government supporters tell us why this motion should not be carried. I am waiting to be convinced. Unfortunately, nothing the hon. member said convinced me that the report should be produced. However, having used my intelligence, such as it is, and having read the title of the report, I cannot see that the report would be particularly damaging to the public interest.

• (5:50 p.m.)

I think this government must be congratulated, rather than condemned, for the kind of information it has made available to the opposition and to the general public, because for the first time in history funds have been

[Mr. Francis.]

given to opposition parties so they can retain suitable personnel and undertake studies that will enable them to reach correct decisions.

The study that the hon. member wishes to be produced covers a wide variety of subjects. One of the areas that has been of particular interest to me—it is an area that my wife has researched more thoroughly than I have—is important to all married people. I refer to the matter mentioned by the government whip, genetic counselling. The World Health Organization set up what is called an expert committee on human genetics. The sad part of genetic counselling, Mr. Speaker, is that people most often come for this kind of counselling after a defect has been discovered in a child. More information must go out to the public so that people will be aware that genetic counselling services are available.

This committee of the World Health Organization brought forward a report. The deputy director general said that genetic counselling is the most immediate and practical service that can be rendered in medicine and in surgery. He said it is probable that in all countries 4 per cent of live births suffer from some genetic condition which could benefit from genetic counselling, either in relation to repercussions on the family or to successful diagnosis and treatment of hereditary diseases. That is the point I have emphasized before. The report then notes that the experience of existing genetic counselling services shows that about 90 per cent of inquiries are from parents whose offspring are suffering from some disorder. It is the fear of recurrence that prompts them to seek advice. The bulk of the remaining 10 per cent of inquiries relates to the concern that an abnormality in the family may be passed on to future generations.

In some parts of the world there are special genetic problems. It is therefore proper that the World Health Organization saw fit to set up the special committee to study this particular aspect of health. It came to the conclusion that during the past 15 years great advances have been made in the field of human psychogenetics. Those advances have made it possible for us to provide, in many cases, effective genetic counselling. Those who have dealt with retarded children and helped them probably appreciate much better than others the necessity of proper genetic counselling. According to the research that I undertook in the subject—most of it was done before I came to the House of Commons—many places in Canada provide this service. Locally, the department of paediatrics of the University of Ottawa provides such a service. The advances made have also served to stimulate lay as well as medical interest in the field of genetic counselling. It is important that information should be available not only to doctors but to lay persons as well. Not only must this kind of information be imparted to laymen and others, but our communities must know there are genetic counselling agencies which may be used particularly by young people and young married couples.

It seems to me that the report the hon. member asks to be produced is innocuous and I cannot see any great harm in producing it. I shall be interested in hearing