

Adjournment Debate

mother's health is at risk, but there are so many cases, so many different examples. How can we generalize readily when confronted with something like that and in particular, Mr. Speaker, make that operation even more easy to obtain. How many young girls who discover through their doctors or with a simple drugstore test that they are pregnant would go right away to an abortion clinic, without even telling their parents and supposedly to save their family honour, with possible consequences, Mr. Speaker, traumas for the rest of their lives!

I could go on for a long time, but I want to allow other Members of this House to speak on that question. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill, however commendable, is still premature, and each one of us must examine his or her conscience and consult again even more closely with the Canadian people on that very serious subject.

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am please to rise on Bill C-208, especially at this time when our values, the values that we have inherited from the previous generation, are questioned by many. Personally, I would be inclined to vote for this Bill. However, I find that it would be very inappropriate to do so at this time because, while there are many statements being made concerning the sanctity of life, and the respect of the individual what is at stake here is justice. I believe there is presently a case being heard before the Superior Court and I believe the judicial process must be respected as well. Mr. Speaker, when the motion introduced by the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) was debated in this House, I have stated that I was against that motion because we do not have the right as legislators to turn our children into criminals, or rather to put in our statute book legislations that will make it a criminal act to decide whether or not one want to have a child. And we do not have a right to introduce in our society a double standard, that is those who have the money to obtain an abortion abroad and those who do not have any money and who must put up with the situation or stand to be prosecuted.

So in the name of justice I would like to indicate that yes, I would be favourable to this Bill. I would like the procedure to be made simpler, but I think that the present legislation is the result of a compromise, a compromise that is difficult to live with and I believe we have examples of this everyday in our daily life. That compromise... You know, the teacher in school would dearly like all the students to be at the same level. However, sometimes one must be humble enough to take people as they are and not as one would like them to be. The apprenticeship of freedom is an ongoing process.

So in that context I believe the compromise that presently exists deserves to be lived with and to be debated and after that, there will be an opportunity to discuss it further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 42(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 deemed to have been moved.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION—IRAN—IMPRISONMENT OF BAHAI LEADERS

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, on November 17, 1987, I questioned the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) with regard to Canada's efforts to halt the persecution of the Baha'i community in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since that time I have received more information to indicate that the fate of the Baha'i community in general, and of 17 individuals in particular, is in grave danger.

The evidence I have received seems to indicate that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is engaging in a long-term plan to terminate believers of the Baha'i faith. Over 200 Baha'is have been murdered or executed since 1979. There are currently over 10,000 homeless Baha'is in Iran who have been terrorized through the seizure of their properties and the dismantling of their educational and religious organizations. Indeed, the Baha'is have been described by the highest levels of the Iranian Government as being "unclean infidels, worthy of death for their beliefs".

The Baha'i faith was established in the 1840s and members of this faith have lived in Iran since its formation. The Baha'is have been the target of severe discrimination and persecution under all regimes in Iran. I am extremely concerned, as are many of my colleagues in the House of Commons, with the situation of the Baha'is in Iran since the current regime came to power in 1979 after the revolution. The statistics I have seen are staggering.

There are approximately 300,000 members of the Baha'i faith in Iran yet their Government refuses to recognize them as a religious minority. As a result, Baha'is are denied every human right. According to documentation I have received from the department of public affairs of the Baha'i community of Canada, the Baha'i religious minority has no protection under Iranian law of their personal status. They are routinely deprived of their inheritances, business licences, and education solely because of their religious beliefs. The denial of any individual's human rights is something which Canadians find repugnant. The situation in Iran is particularly distressing because, although Iran is a co-signator to the international covenant on civil and political rights and has stated that the covenant is compatible with Islamic law, it is guilty of severe violations of guaranteed rights.

The Baha'i community in Iran suffers terribly because of its religious beliefs. All of their holy places and religious sites