

*Criminal Code*

Men themselves through their governments have always been enacting legislation for the protection of life. It is the function of the police officer, for instance, to watch over the property of man and to ensure the protection of his life.

It is also the duty of those who govern to enforce the laws so as to provide our old people with the financial assistance necessary for their maintenance. The same duty falls upon the civil servants responsible for the administration of welfare pensions, veterans' pensions, disabled persons' pensions and family allowances.

We spend millions for national defence, for the construction of shelters in case of nuclear warfare, therefore with the intention of protecting our lives. We have an instinct of self-preservation but I cannot see why this life which we love, which we cherish and which is beyond our control, should not also be ensured for other human beings.

By the will of God, women perform a task of an incomparable greatness in our human society and therefore humanity owes them a great deal. We all had a mother and although mine is no more, I thank her for maintaining my life in her womb in spite of the sacrifices and inconveniences she likely experienced.

I witnessed the birth of every one of my 12 children and I quickly understood the meaning of the great sigh of relief of the mother as she asked the doctor: "Is my baby alive?" and got a yes in reply.

It is at a doctor's request I am saying all these things, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that life is something of an exceptional value, that cannot be measured and that we must endeavour by all means to preserve it even in the case of those we cannot see with our own eyes but of whose existence we are aware. It is our responsibility to provide them with that opportunity, to enable them to replace us and live their own life on earth.

At a doctor's request, I even witnessed an extremely difficult childbirth and I heard that cry on the part of the desperate mother: "Doctor, save my child first!" That, I believe, unquestionably proves that life is a priceless gift, the value of which only a mother can really understand.

I know there is still nowadays a great number of married women who accept their responsibility as mothers and try by all possible means to preserve the life of their unborn child. Our society should do more in order to help pregnant mothers; thus induced abortions would be less numerous.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

We are told that people still have abortions, though illegally. Maybe so. However, in a letter I received from "l'Alliance pour la vie", signed by the president and vice-president of that association, hence by two women, I found the following passage:

Some hon. members feel, it seems, that the new law on abortion will legalize the act only for serious reasons such as saving the life of the mother. Although this is seldom necessary, it is generally recognized that abortions for such motives are already legal. The changes proposed by the omnibus bill open the door far wider than that.

What does the Medical Association have to say in this regard? This, and I quote:

It is universally recognized, by all serious obstetricians, that the cases where a therapeutic abortion would really save the life of the mother have become extremely rare and are growing increasingly fewer with scientific progress. On the other hand, an abortion performed to improve the health or the well-being of the mother, or to prevent the birth of a possibly malformed infant, becomes an act of social euthanasia. If a malformed being can be killed in the womb of his mother, why can he not be killed outside of it?

Doctors are speaking here, Mr. Speaker.

I continue:

However, an abortion performed when the life of the mother is endangered by the pregnancy can be looked upon, in that case, no longer as a measure of euthanasia but as a case of legitimate defence. Legitimate defence does not necessarily mean unjust aggression. However, for an act to be considered as legitimate defence there must be on the one hand some relation between the defensive measure and the aggression and, on the other hand, the offensive act must be the only possible means of defence.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. C-150 has already been studied by other organizations. A while ago, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) told us that unfortunately there are not very many women in the house; if there were more of them, perhaps the men might think differently.

• (4:10 p.m.)

I was sent a petition signed by 5,000 people. Of course, I did not read all the names one after the other, but I did notice that the vast majority of those who had signed were women. They are petitioning against abortion and homosexuality. I shall deal with it at greater length later.

Bill No. C-150 proposes to legalize abortion for reasons related to protecting the health of the mother. It is left to the discretion of a small abortions committee to pass judgment on the matter. Indeed, the act will allow two doctors, who constitute the majority of a