

*Criminal Code*

so much in its provisions as in the fact that the government recognizes that the majority of the Canadian people definitely want to come to grips with the problem of abortion.

• (12:10 p.m.)

I have been appalled, but not too much surprised, at the number of the members of this house who have absolutely refused to recognize that there is an abortion problem, a problem that exists in real life. Yes, it exists in their philosophies and in the particular religious and moral convictions they have cited. It is real there, but they have refused to recognize it is a real thing in the lives of thousands of Canadian women today. They have refused to see the problem that exists. They have refused to recognize that thousands of Canadian women every year are getting abortions, most of which are illegal under the present law. They have refused to realize that those women who can pay are able to get an abortion abroad or right here in Canada; and these abortions are carried out carefully and safely in all respects. As I have said, this applies to those women who can pay. Those women who cannot pay are being butchered, mutilated and tortured by people who are often quacks and unfitted for the job. Often well-intentioned neighbours attempt abortions with barbarous instruments. Some women have to resort to people of this type because they have no other way of securing an abortion.

Many women are having to bear the burden of pregnancies which they do not want and cannot cope with at all. We have been told over and over again in this house that women ought to be able to bear the consequences of their act, just as though the act were not participated in by others. Here I refer to the male half of the team, which very often gets off scot-free and has no difficulty at all. This hideous discrimination is continuing. We have the disgusting hypocrisy of seeing this kind of thing going on and the law doing nothing to grapple with the problem. The choice we in Canada face today is not whether we shall have abortions or no abortions, because we will have abortions and they are being performed now. The choice is, shall we have legal, safe abortions regardless of whether people are wealthy or not or shall we continue with the backroom, butcher system of abortion which we have had to date? This is the choice before us.

We in this party wanted it declared legally that abortion is not a crime. We wanted to do what we are proposing to do with respect to

birth control legislation, that is, remove it from the Criminal Code altogether and put it where it belongs, under the heading of a medical and social problem. We wanted to leave the question of abortion to the decision of the pregnant woman, her doctor and those people directly concerned on either side of the partnership. That is what we wanted, Mr. Speaker, but you, quite rightly, found this was not possible in the way in which our amendment had to be drafted. Therefore we shall have to continue to press as best we can for the enlargement of the legislation introduced by the government. We shall support this legislation until we get something better.

This is a 4 per cent law. A similar law was passed recently in Colorado and it is called just that, the 4 per cent law, because it affords relief and help to about 4 per cent of the women who need it. I talked recently with Dr. Alan Guttmacher of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, and he tells me it is true that the Colorado law will minister to about 4 per cent of the women who need this help. We shall support the government legislation because it is an improvement over the present law even though it falls very far short of what is necessary. This legislation does not touch the question of illegal abortion, which is the most serious aspect of the problem for those women in the low income groups.

I should like to tell the house one or two things in which I believe. I believe that the state has no right to compel a woman to continue a pregnancy which she feels unable to cope with, whether for reasons of physical, mental, or emotional health or of economic circumstances. I believe the state has no right to compel an unwanted child to be born.

We have been told by speakers to my left that women want abortions for reasons which are often not at all serious. We have been told that it is not a serious reason for a woman to want an abortion when she already has a number of children and feels that for health or economic reasons, she cannot cope with any more. In my view it is the responsibility of parents to have only the number of children they can afford. It is the responsibility of parents to have only the number of children they can afford to raise properly as Canadian citizens in good health, well educated and well aware of their responsibilities. This is the responsibility of parenthood. To go ahead and have all the children that arrive is in my view the height of irresponsibility in today's world. I believe that, Mr. Speaker, from the very depths of my being.