

*Private Members' Business*

There was the Nancy B. case in which it was felt necessary to have court-sanctioned permission for the physician to remove Nancy B. from her life support systems. Surely that sort of trial and turmoil for a patient, for a person living in great pain and great suffering toward the end of their life is undignified and should not be required in Canada.

Most recently, we have seen the case of Sue Rodriguez. I do not think anybody in this Chamber or many Canadians would want to have to go through the same torture she is going through in trying to get permission to ask a physician to assist her in ending her life when she concludes that her quality of life is such that she can no longer continue. She wants to have the opportunity to have the assistance of a physician to end her life, and we know what she is having to go through in order to obtain that.

Surely that is undignified in Canada. Surely it is uncaring and uncompassionate. Surely it is something that we have to do something about.

We have been called upon to act in this matter by the Chief Justice of British Columbia, Chief Justice McEa- chern, who in a decision which considered the issues carefully and with great compassion, argued that while in individual cases a court could respond appropriately the issue should be dealt with at the level of national public interest because, after all, that is where it needs to be addressed.

We are really asking for people to have the right to choose to end their lives under very restrictive circumstances. We are also asking for physicians who assist in that act in that compassionate and caring situation to be protected from criminal sanction.

The Chief Justice of British Columbia has urged this House to act, and this House has the opportunity to respond positively to the motion of my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam.

At the moment we have a situation in which the only restraints on physician assistance in dying are contained in physicians' codes of ethics. We know that across this country patients are assisted in the dying process by physicians every day. We also know that physicians are concerned about the repercussions of potential criminal

sanction as a result of responding to their patient's wishes. It is time that we allowed those physicians who act on their patient's wishes out of compassion and caring to do so without fear of criminal sanction.

It would be a progressive response for this House to respond positively to the member's motion. I congratulate the member on bringing this issue to the House of Commons. It is not every day that controversial issues are raised by members of Parliament.

• (1115)

It is appropriate that the House of Commons is faced with these difficult issues because it is surely a question for society as a whole to respond to, and this House through its legislative powers and responsibilities lays down what is appropriate for society in many respects.

Is it not the time for us to say that people who are nearing the end of their lives and whose quality of life is unacceptable to them because of the physical or emotional pain and suffering they face, because the prognosis is so negative and because they want to speed the dying process, should have the right to do so? Is it any longer critical for Canada to say that they cannot do that, that they cannot ask someone to assist them in doing it, and that if they do then the person who assists them will be liable for a criminal offence?

I believe our society has progressed to the level at which we can say that it is not a reprehensible act that should be punished by a criminal penalty and that we should respond in a caring and compassionate way to people like Sue Rodriguez, Nancy B. and the many other Canadians faced with the same tragedy who merely want the opportunity to end their pain and suffering.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising in opposition to this motion. I do not think it is a progressive measure to enshrine into the law of this land a motion that supports euthanasia.

I want to begin by saying that I have deep respect for the member who sponsored this motion and for the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing whom I just finished listening to. My opposition to this motion not only results from a personal experience but also from views that I have heard from many of my constituents.

I would like to begin by talking about a personal experience that has caused me to believe that this is not the right way to go. It was the spring of 1988 and I was returning from a holiday in Cuba. I came off the plane