

our trust in the ethics and judgment of the women and men of Canada's medical community.

My colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, in speaking to this bill made it clear that the government will redouble its effort to help Canadians avoid unplanned pregnancies and the agonizing choices that follow.

As a woman and as a mother, I know that women who choose to have an abortion do not make the decision lightly. In many cases, the individuals may feel that no alternative exists because of their economic or social situation. We owe it to these people to do whatever we can to help them avoid the problem in the first place and to provide all the possible alternatives to abortion in cases where unplanned pregnancies have occurred.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare mentioned some of these measures that are planned. They include increased research into family planning, including contraception, continued funding of Planned Parenthood of Canada and measures to encourage more pregnant women to consider adoption.

We must remember that young people in Canada today are exposed to a far more chaotic social environment than the one which most of the members in this House experienced. If we do not take steps as a society to provide greater stability and to support the individual, we can scarcely be surprised when that individual faces problems which might not occur if the educational, religious and family systems were all as effective as we would like them to be.

In two elections I told the people of my region that I did not believe in abortion as a method of birth control, but that I could not support legislation that took away the right of a woman or, where necessary, parents of an under-aged child to make a decision, no matter how painful, to end a pregnancy. This is a matter for a woman in consultation with her doctor and with the guidance of her God. This bill is consistent with that belief and I would urge the House to support it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount):** Mr. Speaker, like all my colleagues in this House I have been flooded with letters and phone calls from my constituents. Admittedly, opinions are diametrically opposed on

the issue of abortion. Some firmly believe that life begins at conception and have urged me to support a legislative measure which would be aimed at protecting the foetus right from the moment of conception. Others do not share that view. I respect the opinion of each individual.

I listened with interest to the remarks made on this subject by all Members of the House who have also heard from their constituents.

I recall the comments of the Minister of State for Employment and Immigration, the Member for Rimouski-Témiscouata, who told us about a family father who said he was in favour of this Bill but who, to his 13-year-old daughter who asked him what he would do if she came home pregnant, replied: If you chose to interrupt pregnancy we would take all available means. On the other hand, if you wished to keep the child we would want you to lead a normal and happy life and we would help you raise the child as if he or she were our own.

I should like to direct a question to Members of the House. If a young girl in such circumstances decided to interrupt pregnancy, would we be right to say that she is committing a crime? Are we justified to make a young girl of 13 or 14 a possible accomplice of a crime for having obtained an abortion if she does not meet the requirements of this legislation?

• (2010)

Because, if I am not mistaken, that is what could happen with the bill we are considering today.

Mr. Speaker, one of the principles of democratic societies is that the state should not tell everyone what to do. Therefore the state must allow every woman to choose freely according to her own philosophy or her own religious beliefs.

[*English*]

It has long been accepted in western society that individual rights are the basis of our concept of human dignity and liberal democracy. I voted for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1981 because I believed that the courts had a role to play in defining the rights of Canadians and in setting limits to governmental action.

In the Morgentaler decision, Madam Justice Wilson puts it this way: "The rights guaranteed in the Charter erect around each individual, metaphorically speaking, an invisible fence over which the state will not be