

able to reflect upon this procedure and to consult with spiritual or medical advisers. The decision should be made by someone who may reflect upon taking a very difficult step. A committee is much more bureaucratic. People attempt to draw up guidelines and members of committees have other responsibilities. They can be very pressed to make decisions and may not have time to do the kind of adequate reflection that may be necessary when making such a very difficult decision. I think this kind of decision is much more suited to people who have opportunities to reflect upon it because it is obviously a very difficult one to make.

I wish to touch on the question of reducing the number of therapeutic abortions that take place in Canada. It is the contention of this motion that tougher laws and regulations will reduce the number of abortions that take place here. I would suggest that tougher laws will simply put us back to where we were before 1969 when people who needed therapeutic abortions ended up getting them under the table by people who were not qualified. Women's lives were put in danger. Rather than reducing the number of abortions that take place, tougher laws, though they will put the question out of sight, are likely to see that abortions will continue to take place.

A more effective strategy for reducing the number of therapeutic abortions in Canada, a worth-while and worthy objective that we should pursue actively, is to focus upon prevention. We must prevent situations in which women would consider taking this step. We need better education on contraception and better education in human relations for young people so that they will not be taken advantage of as readily. That way, fewer teenage girls will find themselves choosing between being a parent at a very young age, thus cutting off their education and personal development, or taking such a serious step as a therapeutic abortion.

I see that you are indicating that my time has run out, Madam Speaker. I would like to close by saying that this motion requires a great deal more study. There are various constitutional and policy questions that have been suggested by the Hon. Member in bringing forward this resolution.

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on a motion proposed by a colleague of mine, the Hon. Member for Grey—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges), on a matter which I consider to be extremely important in that it deals with the protection of the unborn child. Abortion has been debated in Canada with varying degrees of vigour since 1967 when then Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced changes to the abortion law which did not legalize abortion but rather made it permissible, when a committee of three doctors at an accredited hospital ruled that the continuation of pregnancy would be likely to endanger a woman's life or health.

Since that time, the subject has been raised in this House on many occasions, often to a further polarization of views, eliminating even the possibility of constructive compromise

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and efficient reform. That is why the motion raised by my hon. colleague is so significant. It allows us the opportunity of addressing this issue in an attempt to find some degree of common ground in order to protect and enhance human life.

After all, we are not suggesting a consensus for the sake of political expediency or partisan gain. Instead, we are engaging in productive dialogue that will enable us to improve the human condition. The former Hon. Member for Edmonton East, Mr. Yurko, stated while introducing two private Members' Bills on this subject in 1980:

This is not a partisan issue. It is a moral issue of profound importance. It is an issue upon which each individual must reflect and make up his own mind.

When dealing with such a controversial subject matter, our first inclination is to pre-suppose a high degree of radicalism and extremism on both sides of the issue. I submit that while a certain amount of this is obviously in existence today, a great deal of the emotional and sometimes violent contentions are confined to select and limited interest groups. For the most part, Canadians are quite willing to strike a balance for the sake of more effective laws serving all of the public.

Contrary to most popular conceptions, it is the responsibility of democratic institutions to serve the people at large rather than follow the narrowly prescribed dictates of limited and specialized interest groups. Results obtained from surveys conducted in my riding reveal a substantial portion of individuals who take a moderate position between the more radical factions of pro-life and pro-choice supporters. I agree with figures suggesting that this group accounts for approximately 60 per cent on a national basis and I also support the contention that neither of the extremist positions can claim support from more than 25 per cent of the population. A review of Gallup polls on abortion taken in 1975, 1978 and 1983 indicated that only 16 to 23 per cent favoured abortion under any circumstances while an even smaller proportion, 14 per cent to 17 per cent, opposed it under any circumstances.

The motion on the floor today would amend the Constitution Act, 1982, by including unborn persons and would read as follows:

Everyone including a human foetus or unborn being has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

● (1720)

In preparing and introducing this motion, the Hon. Member for Grey Simcoe is to be strongly commended for the strength of his conviction and the courage he has exhibited in dealing with this rather crucial topic. He has continually conducted passionate and at the same time logical discourse on a subject of an extremely sensitive nature. Therefore, in keeping with that tradition, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly review the question of abortion, which contains no easy answers for anyone who does not pretend to have a monopoly on morality or virtue.

Whether or not one supports or opposes liberation of the abortion law, there appears to exist a general agreement with