

Private Members' Business

I will never forget what followed. It was in 1984. As we walked into the campaign headquarters to begin our 1984 campaign I thought I saw a ghost in front of me. Here was Takhur standing at the entrance, unshaven, skin and bones. This was three months after I had seen him in hospital, and I thought he was gone already. There he was standing, and the driving force was that he wanted to help me win the next campaign. He had such a will to live that he wanted to help me to win the next campaign. The medical doctor had said straight to my wife and I: "No, he will not come out of this".

• (1530)

Let us take the case where maybe this gentleman would have signed something that said: "Should this happen to me I want no assistance and I want a doctor to help me end my life without pain". That man would have been gone in 1984. He is still living today and quite active. He is not in the best of health but he is looking after himself. He cooks for himself and looks after all his needs.

An hon. member: Is he still supporting you?

Mr. Flis: Yes, he is still supporting me.

If we pass this legislation that could have been someone whose life would have been snuffed out in 1984, and yet he is living today. As a result of those two experiences I have to speak out strongly against any legislation that would assist taking someone's life.

I may be wrong or I may be right. However, after going through that kind of personal experience I am sorry but I must speak very strongly against this motion and any such legislation that would promote the enhancement of taking someone's life.

I have a third example. My own mother-in-law in Joliette, Quebec had a very severe stroke at 79 years of age and she was a vegetable. She could not speak, she could not move her limbs, et cetera. It would have been very easy had she said, as she did in her cultural ways: "Oh, it is time for me to go" before she had her stroke.

Well that woman, my mother-in-law, lived to be 89 years old. Again professional advice and her own will could have said: "I want to end it at age 79". She had a will to live. I remember when she was recovering and her hand was not working. She did not take any physiotherapy. She did her own physiotherapy. She kept slapping her hand. She would say: "You crazy hand, how come you are not working?" She got herself going to the point where she was walking. She saw more grandchildren grow up and she went on peacefully, but at 89 years of age not at 79 years of age. I am sure other members in this House have other examples of cases like this.

I thank the hon. member for introducing this motion because it does allow us to debate this calmly and intelligently in this House. I am getting a lot of direction from my constituents and I am sure other members are. I am sure this debate is going to come back to this House again. I hope it will because we do have to debate it seriously.

Mr. Bob Horner (Mississauga West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on the motion of the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam. I understand why the member has moved this motion. I understand his concerns about dying with dignity. I understand his concerns about alleviating suffering. I understand his concerns about quality of life, but I have a concern that maybe things are being rushed.

I am not clear what the member is trying to achieve with this motion. The way I understand it the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam is not asking the government to legislate on euthanasia but is asking the government to consider the advisability of introducing legislation on the subject of euthanasia. In a sense we may say that the member is not asking for too much. I am sure this debate will return to the House of Commons.

I would think that monitoring the criminal law is part of the responsibility of the Minister of Justice, and surely monitoring the criminal law means looking at areas in which the law needs to be changed. It means considering the advisability of introducing legislation in those areas which are in need of change.