

*Criminal Code*

So much so that we rightly ask ourselves what would be the value of any other material resources of the country, if there were no human beings to use it.

Society spends huge sums in order to save and protect human life. In universities, scientists are carrying out research to discover some ways to cure fatal diseases.

Mr. Speaker, a man can conceive all sorts of projects in all kinds of fields, but he will never succeed by himself in reviving a dead person. And if we are here as human beings, it is not on account of our own power, but as the result of the respect which our parents have shown for life, in spite of the difficulties and hardships which they experienced.

Mr. Speaker, if we become conscious of the material advantages which science makes available to the nation, it is obvious that clause 18 of Bill C-150 now before us is based on wickedness or falsehoods.

It is true that families and children have less and less place in modern society, but I am convinced that life has an exceptional value, one that cannot be measured, and that all necessary means must be taken to preserve it even for those who cannot be seen but who are known to exist.

And I must congratulate the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) who proposes the following amendment:

Nothing in this section shall be construed as obliging any hospital to establish a therapeutic abortion committee or any qualified medical practitioner to procure the miscarriage of a female person.

Mr. Speaker, amendment No. 21, proposed on April 14, 1969, is most appropriate, if we refer to some excerpts of the 880 pages of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the standing Committee on Health and Welfare.

From page 46, we refer to an article of Dr. Isabelle, on the inefficiency of therapeutic abortions.

Dr. Gaston Isabelle: —Those committees (for the study of abortion cases) were tested in the United States in the last four or five years.

And Dr. Isabelle quotes:

A few years ago, a number of hospitals set up Abortion Review Committees which were normally composed of specialists, in order to examine such requests of abortion. Generally, the committees produced unsatisfactory results for the following reasons:

In the same line of thought, Dr. Patrick Beirne, states at page 504, and I quote:

Just as individuals may have liberal or conservative views on assistance, the same applies in [Mr. Godin.]

the case of abortion committees. And the general public quickly perceives the difference between liberal and conservative committees.

In New York, two hospitals, a few streets away from one another, have abortion committees. In the first one, there is one therapeutic abortion per 16,000 deliveries. In the other, there is one abortion per 20 births. So committees are not guaranteeing us that our own interpretation of what seems a step for the public weal will be respected. One committee is not enough. I think that clearer information should be given.

Mr. Speaker, here is a text we received in January 1968 from the Quebec Association of Hospital Medical Boards regarding the bill under consideration. It is not recent, as can be seen. I quote:

At our inquiry we noted that most of the medical offices and boards of directors of hospitals in Quebec officially and formally protested against the establishment of therapeutic abortion committees in their own hospitals. Because of professional ethics and of the tendency constantly recorded in their profession, hospital doctors are greatly reluctant to belong to such committees and moreover they refuse themselves to make any therapeutic abortion.

It must be noted that such legislation does not take into account religious and moral convictions of a great many doctors and hospitals afraid of becoming liable to legal prosecution for not having committed what they consider a crime against their professional ethics. But are doctors not always trying to save their patients from death?

And on page 2 of the same report, one can read:

—any abortion purporting to improve the health or the well-being of the mother or to prevent the birth of a malformed baby becomes a social act of mercy killing. If it is permitted to kill such a baby when he is in his mother's bosom, why should it not be allowed when he is out of it. However, if abortion is performed when the life of the mother is endangered by pregnancy, it can then be considered not as euthanasia but as a case of self-defence. Self-defence does not imply necessarily the presence of an unjust aggressor. To warrant self-defence, however, there must be some proportion between the method of defence and the act of aggression, and the offensive act must be the only possible method of defending oneself. But specific medical information pertaining to cases when, in order to save the mother's life, it is obviously necessary to kill the foetus is extremely rare, according to all medical practitioners. Since such cases are unfrequent, one can even wonder whether a permissible legislation is warranted.

A further excerpt on page 3 of the same brief reads as follows:

Because this legislation may lead to abuse, the Association of Hospital Medical Boards of the province of Quebec objects to the legalization of therapeutic abortion when the only ground is the health or well-being of the mother.