

Private Members' Business

Physicians have operated under these oaths for 2,500 years. These oaths are there because patients need the assurance that a doctor's only *raison d'être* is to make them better, never to make them worse. Doctors operate under the motto: First do no harm. What would euthanasia do to all that? What would it do to the trust that exists between a patient and a doctor?

I never question my doctor's intention, none of us do. If we did for just the slightest moment, obviously we would change physicians. Most of us never change physicians. We have the same physician for years and years. Why do we do that? Because we trust physicians. We sometimes agree or disagree with a particular treatment they might have given us. We have never ever asked ourselves: Is my physician there to do me good or harm? We take it as a given that the physician's role will always be to make it better. I do not want to see that eroded.

I want to talk a bit about the slippery slope. Dr. Robert Conot, the author of *Justice at Nuremberg*, has reminded us of what can happen when a society allows itself to be guided by strictly utilitarian rather than humanitarian principles.

• (1145)

In Weimar, Germany, not Nazi Germany, the mentally and physically ill were entitled to the so-called favour of painless death. This principle was subsequently extended to other useless eaters, including residents of homes for the aged. The Nazis then extended the concept afterward to include Jews, Slavs and others who they felt were not useful to the party in power. That is how it began in that particular country.

How did that society slide that way? To quote Dr. Conot: "Theirs"—the Nazis—"was no plunge to damnation from conscious decision but a step-by-step descent into darkness, each step marking a small erosion of ethics and morality". That is how they slid into that.

Some members in this House might disagree with me about the slippery slope, but then what? I believe that euthanasia would still be wrong because it cheapens human life.

Only a few days ago we learned through the media that a Dutch psychiatrist was acquitted after injecting a depressed patient with a lethal substance. How could we tell our fellow citizens that murder is wrong if we were to

permit doctors to do it? How could we tell our young and emotionally fragile citizens that suicide is wrong and that life is precious if we allow life to be destroyed in this kind of a cavalier manner?

The Criminal Code of Canada forbids aiding, counselling or assisting a suicide. I believe it does so because the absence of such rules would erode the patient-doctor trust, as I said previously, but it does so as well because killing is wrong.

There is even a third reason. I want to quote from a reference made in report No. 58 of the Law Reform Commission which states: "The law does not exist for the sole or primary purpose of punishing illicit acts. It exists as an expression in a broad sense of the kind of people that we are. It does not merely regulate our behaviour; it articulates and symbolizes our values and our beliefs". That is why there is that prohibition in the Criminal Code.

Even if members disagree with me as to the other reasons, even if they do not think there is a slippery slope in spite of the evidence to the contrary, even if they do not believe that Holland exists as a nation with its experience in spite of evidence to the contrary, then I hope that all of us could surely agree that the reason the law is there is to state those things we think are valuable.

Some will say: "It is easy for you, Boudria. Maybe you have not lived with this very much". Actually about a year and a week ago my wife lost her mother to terminal cancer. A year almost to the day before, I lost my father as a result of a malignant brain tumour. That certainly was not easy, but that does not mean I now favour euthanasia. It means quite the opposite. It means that I understand even better how precious and fragile life is.

Collectively and individually we must make statements in this House about the value and dignity of human life. We must not say things to cheapen it any more than it has been already.

Mr. Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the more important issues that has come before the House of Commons. That the discussion has begun in this session of Parliament for the first time is important. If not in this Parliament certainly by the next Parliament it will lead to changes before the law. It is inevitable because the majority of people, the nature of medical technology and many other factors are driving us in a direction that calls for discussion, reason and