

This bill does nothing to protect the life of the unborn. It does not promote the value and dignity of human life, nor does it address the rightful concerns of women.

The bill states that abortion is prohibited unless a woman's health is in danger, but health is defined in such a broad and unverifiable way that this bill will basically allow abortion on demand. The bill sets no limits on the threat to health necessary to warrant abortion. A doctor will be able to perform a legal abortion for a woman once he forms the opinion that her life or her physical, mental, or psychological health would likely be threatened if the abortion were not performed. The proposed laws will not require the doctor to consult other doctors or to carry out the procedure in licensed premises, clinic, or hospital.

As a medical doctor myself by professional background, I must point out that this puts the medical profession in an inappropriate situation. Basically the medical profession will be delegated a task of writing parts of Canada's criminal law. It is not the duty of a physician in practice to be a legislator. The duty of a physician is not to solve the social and economic problems of society through performing abortions, but to protect the life of the unborn, a foetus' right to life.

It might seem that a pregnant woman has the right to abort since legal proscription of abortion seems to interfere with personal liberty. But I must submit that unrestricted personal freedom is not always possible.

It is acknowledged that the freedom of one person is limited by the personal freedom of other people. That is why we have in our Canadian Constitution a provision to that effect.

All seven Supreme Court judges stated in last year's ruling on this issue that the state has a valid interest in the protection of the foetus. The test is whether in exercising that interest Parliament imposes reasonable, demonstrably justified limits on a woman's constitutional right to security of the person, and whether those limits accord with fundamental principles of justice. The ruling of the Supreme Court in fact tells us that we in Parliament have a solemn duty to pass legislation on this issue.

Human dignity includes the right to the free development of one's personality which allows each individual to act on his or her personal moral convictions. But,

conversely, human life and dignity have to be respected by anyone making use of his or her own right to act freely.

Thus the freedom to have an abortion must be limited to the extent that such an action encroaches on the rights of others, on the right of the unborn in the womb of his or her mother. Before discussing this further, I must point out that there is a possible encroachment on the rights of the person who makes use of her right to privacy by procuring an abortion.

Abortion may endanger the life and the health of the pregnant woman. Complications which can arise from abortion include perforation of the uterus and other physical damage. There is also a high incidence of post-abortion mental health problems, the symptoms of which include feelings of guilt, depression, drug dependencies, and even suicide attempts. Thus from the point of view of the mother's physical and mental health, in almost all situations it is to the woman's advantage to carry a pregnancy to term rather than to abort it.

Hence to preserve a woman's life or health, the woman's personal liberty to decide the fate of the unborn life may be restricted. Obviously it is necessary to prohibit destruction of unborn life, not only to protect the woman, not only to protect the mother, but also to save the unborn child himself or herself.

If unborn life were considered less worthy of protection than born life, this could lead to a decrease in the protection of born life itself. Just as a differentiation between born and unborn life is made, so a differentiation between life worthy of a right to live and life without such a right could be made.

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Such differentiation has been made in the past. And we are all aware of the horrible results. Despite this, there are still people in certain parts of the world who consider abortion to be an accepted means of birth control. This, I submit, is reprehensible. This cannot be condoned and it is the responsibility of the state to prevent this.

Medical science has established that a foetus has its own body organs, has its own genetic code and is capable of full life after birth if allowed to fully develop in the mother's womb. When others argue that the stage of viability of the foetus be the criterion for abortion, then I submit that viability of the foetus is threatened, not