

In summing up my remarks I strongly support the pro-life position. In fact, I have had this conviction throughout my entire life. There is no doubt in my mind that the unborn child, the foetus, whatever term you want to refer to it, is simply that term. It is the same as referring to a pre-schooler, an adolescent, a teenager, a middle-aged person or a senior citizen. It just happens to be a time at a particular stage of development. I feel very strongly about this issue because the unborn cannot speak for themselves. It is incumbent upon those of us who are elected to represent the people of our areas to stand up and proclaim the necessity to respect all human life and to oppose any change in the abortion laws and any change in making abortions more readily available.

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I too welcome the chance to speak on Bill C-208 sponsored by the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). I have great respect for his judgment in a number of areas but on this particular Bill we differ totally.

Let me read again the purpose of the Bill:

The purpose of this Bill is to recognize that the fundamental decision to terminate a pregnancy belongs to the woman concerned in consultation with her physician. At present, the Criminal Code requires the establishment of therapeutic abortion committees and in most parts of Canada accredited hospitals have refused to set up such committees thus, in fact, denying many women access to safe legal abortions.

This Bill would abolish therapeutic abortion committees and would allow qualified medical practitioners to perform abortions without having to obtain prior authorization from such committees.

The previous speaker, my colleague, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Gottselig) stressed respect for life. That is my theme also. I do not think anyone is totally comfortable with the laws as they now stand. I for one would greatly regret it if the current laws were liberalized.

Speaking very personally, in our own family some 20 years ago—we had three children at the time—we decided that a fourth child should be an adopted one. We adopted young John Fraser. He was 11 months old. His mother was a young woman who had one other child and who was unable financially to handle an additional child. We brought that 10 pound youngster home, blond hair at the time—our other three were redheads—and we were so proud to love him, hug him and bring him along. It struck me so many times over the last 20 years that if abortion laws had been a lot more liberal then his birth mother might very well have sought an easy means from whatever was in her heart and mind at that time and we would not have had the privilege of raising that young man who is now 20 years old. There are many other families like this.

My sister who resides in Peterborough and her husband were not able to have a child and adopted two many years ago. They are both in their twenties now. Many members of our church have done the same thing. If for hardship or for other reasons a mother does not want to go through with her pregnancy, there are Canadians who would welcome a baby and be very joyous to have it. The one major qualification I put on the whole process, and I think it is inherent in our

current laws, if the mother's life is at stake, then I think the mother's life comes first. Everyone does not share that particular view, but it is one I share.

I wanted to speak on this Bill to share personally why I could not support further liberalization of the whole process. I could go on with other points but perhaps in the interests of other Members who want to speak on this Bill I will end my remarks. It is with some regret that in a way I differ with my colleague but I do so from the bottom of my heart on this particular issue.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Grisé (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to speak about Bill C-208, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (abortion), sponsored by the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson).

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this a topical issue, and will always be so, and it is also extremely sensitive because it is so personal. Without being directly related to any other debate in this House, such as the debate on the death penalty, it remains a matter of personal definition, attitude and psychology.

Discussing a Bill such as that introduced by the Hon. Member for Burnaby is something I find essential not only for each of us as Members of this House, but also for the Canadian population and especially for the couple or the woman who has to decide whether to have an abortion or not.

Before making such a decision, Mr. Speaker, we also have to look at the situation in which such a decision would be made and at the personal, psychological, emotional and economic context.

Mr. Speaker, how many women, how many young couples, how many young women would have opted for an abortion had there been therapeutic abortion clinics at every street corner? Because of their economic situation, it is often young women of 17, 18 or 20 without much financial resources and whose spouse or partner is still in school who would have decided to go immediately to the nearest abortion clinic. But then, they decided not to do so, Mr. Speaker. Then, when the child is born, there is a radical change in the life of both parents. The birth of the child brings a new awareness and new responsibilities as parents. How many of these parents are happy because they now have what is most precious in this world, a child? These men and women accept their responsibilities as parents in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties they will have to face in life, especially when they are young. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is not easy at 20, 21 or 22, when you are still in school, to face responsibilities and take care of a child. They nevertheless possess something even more precious than all natural resources in the world, a child.

In that context, Mr. Speaker, it is much more difficult, and how many more examples . . . There is no problem when the