

This clause would clarify the law to permit abortions in those circumstances but subject to very carefully defined safeguards. For example, the draft bill provides that any therapeutic abortion must be performed by a qualified practitioner in a public treatment hospital with the consent and approval of the abortion committee of that hospital, if it has one; or if not, with the approval of another medical practitioner; and the consent of the husband of the woman must be obtained or consent of her parent or guardian if she is unmarried. So these are very careful safeguards, and it is important therefore that the law should be clarified.

The Ontario Medical Association has considered this problem, the Committee on Therapeutic Abortions of the Ontario Medical Association has, in effect, recommended that the law be changed along the lines of this provision which is included in my bill. This recommendation by the Committee on Therapeutic Abortions of the Ontario Medical Association was approved at a general meeting of the Ontario Association. I would hope, Mr. Chairman, in view of the importance of the matter to the medical profession and also to women who may perhaps be deprived of rights to which they are entitled under existing law, that this law should be clarified as soon as possible and the committee would proceed to deal with it just as soon as it possibly can.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wahn, of course, I cannot speak for the committee, but this matter was discussed by the steering committee, and in the full committee here, and it is our feeling we should discuss first the matter of birth control. This procedure was not decided on in an attempt to shelve the other matter, but it was our feeling that the two matters while being related are really quite different in principle; one being the prevention of conception and the other being the destruction of a conception. As far as the Chair—and I am sure the committee—is concerned, these matters having been referred to the committee by the House of Commons, we have no alternative but to deal with them. To separate them seemed to us a more reasonable way to deal with the situation, but it does not mean that we are shelving the question of abortion.

I am quite sure that the introductory remarks you have made on the subject will stimulate some people who want to discuss this topic to come forward and make themselves known to the committee.

Mr. WAHN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only other point I should like to make before dealing with the other sections and provisions in the bill is this. I understand there was an indication at the last committee meeting that the committee would be calling witnesses from members of the legal and medical profession.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

● (11: 20 a.m.)

Mr. WAHN: Those witnesses might very well have views on therapeutic abortions as well as on contraception, and it would be a matter, of course, for the steering committee and the committee, but it would seem, without confusing the committee, it might be possible while such witnesses are here to obtain their views with regard to therapeutic abortions. Otherwise, you might have to call back the same witnesses, thus taking the time of the committee and of the witnesses and lengthening out procedures unduly. I realize this is a matter for the committee to decide, but I would have thought that it would be possible in