

*Abortion*

position the NDP has taken, which is opposed to any kind of criminalization of women or physicians involved in these matters, reflects a profound commitment to the desire of women to control their own lives and their own circumstances and to be secure in their own persons. For those reasons, in a certain sense, the NDP could rejoice last January in the fact that the Supreme Court came to a somewhat similar position on the whole matter.

The fact that there is this insistence, then, that women must have this security of person, must have the opportunity to make this decision in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner, the reality of that fact in our caucus and in the positions we have taken over the years, is quite clearly paralleled.

● (2100)

This is in the most genuine of senses a concern about life. We New Democrats are not for abortion. We are for choice and for the right of women to be able to make those choices, to be free to make them. It is a concern about life on which that is based. It is a concern about the lives of women, the lives of families and the lives of children. It is a concern about all these human realities. It is imperative that that be appreciated.

It is all too easy for persons to recognize that abortion is a control question. Every time another man rises to make a speech against abortion, it is astonishing how often he gives himself away in the extent to which he understands that this is a control question, or halfway understands it at least. He knows perfectly well that keeping women in check and under control is a way for men to continue in the control that they have exercised for so long in society.

Against such a context is a choice as an assertion of the freedom of women and their desire to achieve full lives for themselves, to have good lives for their families and to be able to provide for their children the comfort and plenitude we would all like to have. Those are the things that are vital to life in society. To focus in a very narrow way on the question of whether it is a human life from the moment of conception and on not interfering with it in any way is surely to get involved in one very particular aspect of the question and all too easily to ignore all the others.

One Conservative after another is claiming to be really committed to life in this debate this evening which presumably will continue through the nighttime hours and similarly tomorrow and into Thursday. At the same time, they support a Government which in one area after another has acted against the interests of the family. It is not doing enough in the interests of children. It is interfering with the need for family planning and for education in sexuality. To be supporting all those things while at the same time claiming to be a great supporter of human life from the moment of conception is hypocrisy of the worst sort.

This Government has cut back on funding for Planned Parenthood of Canada. It is holding back on family allowances

and increasing taxation for families. It cannot find the money to meet the child care needs of the day let alone into the future. It is a Government which has done nothing in the area of housing policy. I refer as well to previous Liberal Governments which, over the past two decades, have driven the cost of housing to exorbitant levels which load every family down with pressures that force women into the workforce, whether they choose to or not. These pressures make it absolutely essential that both husband and wife be wage earners. Those realities cannot be avoided in any consideration of who is for life and who is against it.

This question is very clearly a moral one. Each of us looks to his own community for assurance or otherwise. As a member of the United Church of Canada, I note that among other points that were made to all Members of Parliament in March of this year by the United Church, the following observations were made:

*The United Church of Canada is not pro-abortion.*

It is in favour of responsible and informed choice in certain medical, social and economic crisis situations.

That is quite clearly a position very much like the one New Democrats take. The United Church also observed:

*Abortion is always a moral issue.*

It must always be seen as the lesser of two evils, a decision to be made in full recognition of the consequences for the woman and her family of either choice. It must not be treated as a form of contraception.

Again, that is a position that New Democrats take time after time. Another item is as follows:

*Women must be respected as moral agents.*

Few, if any, women undertake this decision lightly. Their right to be treated as moral persons must not be ignored.

I put those on the one side in support of what I am saying about the matter of life. I put against that those who claim the pro-life label for themselves and put forward their own radical position that life must be sacred in practically every circumstance from the moment of conception, quite ignoring the realities of spontaneous abortions which occur in remarkable numbers of pregnancies, and other brute facts of pre-natal life. This is an assertion which is largely just an assertion.

Having grown up in an evangelical context, and a number of colleagues in the House are familiar with these influences as well, I have looked at the Scriptures to see if there is any contradiction to the position I am spelling out. I found practically nothing. If one has to look to the poetry of Scripture in the Psalms for some sort of support for a radical position, then it is on the very thinnest of ice that one is skating. If one has then to fall back on the attitude to life that characterizes Judaism, the attitude to life that Christ taught, then we are surely not very far away from what I have been saying about a regard for the freedom and security of person, of women, a concern for the health of the family, a regard for little children and their safety, all of which are concerns of