

Government Orders

So few resources, so few options, so much hunger and sickness. How did the temptation to give up escape these people? How did they manage for generations to pass on this value placed on life?

• (2050)

It may be that when your constant companion is despair and uncertainty, the will to live and cherish life is much greater. Another aspect may be the enormous individual and collective losses my people experienced during epidemics and even the experience of harsh circumstances during childbirth. Adeline Constant of Fort Providence says:

After I was married I had fifteen children. I have only five boys and two girls left to me now. The worst time in my life was when I came close to death. I was with child and went out to check my snares. I became ill and my baby was born dead on the trail. All my children were born on the land except one who was born in the mission.

Now having heard all that, I am sure people are saying, "Come on, wake up, it is 1989 and we all have to move on". Well, my people have moved on. These people have moved on but they have not left their minds, their hearts, their souls and their value for life behind. Their value for life is intact.

I know skeptics and critics will say, "What about the number of abortions being procured by young native women in the north?" I say, "What about all the other social maladies that also exist?" Those statistics are a huge indication of how much work we have to do.

We are not going to be excused from dealing with these problems just by passing legislation. This will not deal with the problems that face men, women and children in dire straits who need our help. We need action from the powers that be to make changes, to put forth the resources and the political will behind programs and policies to aid those that are in need.

Mr. Speaker, I say, through you, to my fellow Canadians: Dear Canada, we have a huge problem, a complex, divisive problem, one that great minds, hearts and souls have struggled over, legal minds have tangled over, and more experienced and talented politicians have debated. Such wisdom and eloquence, and yet no resolution, no consensus.

This human issue of life is more than just that, it is indeed a social dilemma that has virtually stumped the

political process and all that engage in it. It is the debate of our very essence, I believe, maybe even our very existence. We have come closer to accepting our differences but no closer to altering or breaching the values and principles that guide us in our work and our lives.

It is extremely naive to think that we do not bring any bias to the process and that we have come unfettered by our experiences, our education, our close human associations and relationships, our distinct cultural ties. We are all different and the agony of each person is to find a balance that we can live with as being fair.

We are essentially forced into a corner, not just by the current legislation but the issue itself and the demands of the public. I can only say that we have to demonstrate courage to express our position.

My position is one for life. I choose life. I do not belong to the pro-life movement, but I belong to a people who believe that life is sacred and always have under the harshest of circumstances.

I also believe in people who are willing to take the unwanted; I believe in the people who adopt. I am an adopted child. I celebrate my mother and I am the oldest of 15 children. I celebrate my mother because she brought 15 of us into this world, under the harshest of circumstances, with great poverty and difficulty. I celebrate my aunt, my stepbrothers, and my stepsisters because they adopted me. I am a wanted person and I think I have given back to those people what they have invested in me.

I celebrate my people because they are willing to share and they are willing to value a human life and to give it a chance to grow and to nurture it. I celebrate the people who put me here, who have entrusted their votes to me, and I hope that I can, and more than on just this issue, represent them as fairly as I can. But this is indeed a huge dilemma for me and I have struggled with this as many of you have.

We, as parliamentarians and Canadians, have been faced in the past with the consequences of faulty legislation that excludes the rights, ignores the rights and even erodes the rights of groups and individuals, victimizing people who need representation. I cannot support this legislation, such as it is. I cannot take the chance of having this legislation pass. I will vote against it. But I can tell you once more, that for my people, children are