

I guarantee Hon. Members that the Bill which is before us today will be talked out. We will see Conservative Members of Parliament talk until the hour has elapsed. Therefore, the Private Member will be denied the opportunity of having his proposed legislation discussed at the committee stage. I call upon members of the Conservative Party, those Members who will make the decision with respect to whether or not this Bill will go forward, to allow it to go to committee. In this way we can have a good debate on the subject matter.

**Mr. Gormley:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nunziata:** In this way, all Members of Parliament will be able to appear before the committee and express their views. Canadians who are interested in the subject will also be able to come before the committee and express their points of view on this important issue.

We all recognize that the issue is a divisive one. There are those who are for abortion and there are those who are against it. We recognize that it is nearly impossible to reconcile these two polarized positions with respect to abortion. However, I submit we must have the opportunity to debate the subject. We have a duty to those who are interested and concerned about the issue to hold a national debate, not just during Private Members' Hour, but at the committee stage. In this way Canadians can come forward and express their points of view with respect to the issue of abortion. However, the Government will not allow that. I suggest that by not allowing a national debate the Government pays a disservice not only to the issue but to the Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake who brought forward this piece of legislation. It also pays a disservice to the democratic system of Government.

The Government has spoken about enhancing the role of the back-bencher. We know that a committee known as the McGrath Committee recommended ways of enhancing the role of the back-bencher, since it was recognized that back-benchers play a very small role in the policy-making function. We do not legislate when we sit in the back rows. Those who make a difference are those who sit in the front benches on the government side—the Ministers. They are the ones who formulate policy and decide when legislation should go forward.

Thus, it was recognized, and applauded by many, that there was a need to enhance the role of the back-bencher and, therefore, measures should be brought in. If the Government is serious about enhancing the role of the back-bencher and ensuring that back-benchers have a say in bringing forward legislation, then why not allow Bill C-226 to go to committee for debate? Not only is it necessary but it is incumbent upon the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to allow this. I say this because during the election campaign in the summer of 1984 the Prime Minister went on record, and I have a copy of a letter which he sent to a concerned individual, in this regard. He stated that if his Government were elected he would allow a free vote on the subject of abortion. That was the position of the Prime Minister at that time. Talking out this piece of legislation could lead one to seriously question the integrity and honesty of the Prime Minister of Canada.

### *Criminal Code*

During the election campaign he promised to have a vote in the House of Commons on the issue of abortion. We are now some 17 months into the Conservative mandate and we all know that the Government has frittered that mandate which it received on September 4. Nonetheless, the promises are still there. One of those promises was that there would be a debate, a discussion, on abortion in the House of Commons and that each and every Member of Parliament would be given the opportunity to vote according to his or her own conscience. That is what the Prime Minister said in his letter. I challenge the Government to allow that to come about by allowing this Bill to go forward.

● (1740)

I can speak on the merits of this Bill today. I can give the reasons why I am opposed to abortion and why I believe changes are necessary. However, I am not going to convince anyone at this point to change their mind because everyone who is sitting here in the Chamber, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, know that this Bill is going nowhere. It is an effort on behalf of a private Member but because of the Government of the day, the Bill is going nowhere.

It looks good as far as the Government is concerned to allow private Members to bring forward legislation but when it comes time to refer this Bill to committee, I will bet my mortgage—

**Mr. Speyer:** You don't have one.

**Mr. Nunziata:** The Hon. Member says I don't have a mortgage but what is it to bet one's mortgage? A mortgage is a liability. The Government is a liability to the people of Canada. It has mortgaged the people of Canada.

The Government will not allow this Bill to go forward and I say once again that that is a disservice not only to the Hon. Member but to the people of Canada. It would also lead one to ask about the integrity and honesty of the Government. It is just another example of promises made and broken.

If Hon. Members here in the House today truly believe in enhancing the role of the back-bencher, if they really want to have a say in the policy formulation of the nation's business, then they should allow this Hon. Member the opportunity to have this issue discussed at committee. We are not asking anyone to pass a law here today to change the Criminal Code of Canada. That would be unreasonable without a national debate. What is necessary is the opportunity to at least discuss this matter. All the Hon. Member is asking for is just the opportunity to have this matter discussed. If, at the end of it all the law is not changed because the majority of Hon. Members of this House decide that the existing legislation is the best possible compromise, then so be it, democracy has worked its course, Parliament has spoken. Members of this House of Commons have indicated where they stand on that particular issue and one cannot complain. That is the beauty of democracy. However, to deny debate, to deny the opportunity of discussion, is to do a very serious disservice to our democrat-