

Criminal Code

up. I would note as well that in many cases those who would not allow abortion have also opposed the right of men and women to contraception. That is the case in too many areas. I suggest that the most effective way of reducing the number of abortions in Canada is by increasing the funding to the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada and similar provincial organizations, not cutting it as the Government is doing, and ensuring that there is access to contraception and sex education in our schools.

I hope that the Government would be prepared to adopt this measure and ensure freedom of choice for Canadian women.

Mr. Jim Jepson (London East): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak to this Bill which concerns one of the most important issues facing our country. I am even more happy, however, to have the expectation that this Bill will not receive the approval of the House.

This Private Member's Bill, presented by the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson), is designed with the intention of fully legalizing abortion. It reflects the view that neither society nor the state has any business in interfering with a woman's right to make decisions fundamentally concerning herself, her body and the question of reproductive choice.

The position of the Member for Burnaby is that the option of abortion must always be open to Canadian women and that such a choice, made in consultation with a physician, must be reserved for the woman who is directly concerned. In a sense, I would like to thank the Member for bringing this motion before the House. I am very optimistic that if we co-operate we can settle this abortion debate once and for all tonight.

It seems that this is not the first time that the traditional terms of this issue have been set before the House for debate. I will be encouraging the Government, as some point, to bring forth amendments to the Criminal Code that will have the opposite effect to the Bill we see today. I believe that both public opinion and the general leanings of Parliament would support such an initiative. In any case, maybe Hon. Members present today can use the occasion of today's debate to demonstrate to the House and leaders of the Government that the great preponderance of support on this issue would encourage changes to decisively reduce the incidence of abortion.

The primary problem with abortion is simply that women have them performed. They are performed with disturbing and totally unacceptable frequency. The second problem relating to abortion is that people find themselves in a position where they are brought to see abortion as a legitimate alternative.

I believe this is more than just a statement of philosophy. It relates to the strength of a nation, the economic future of Canada and the position Canada holds for human rights around the world. It is because of a deep personal conviction that I have risen in the House today to condemn what I believe is totally irresponsible Bill. To accept this Bill today would be to abandon the moral mandate given our Government.

The sad thing with this Bill is that it will allow and even encourage women to have abortions. Moreover, it will encourage them to continue to get into positions where they will see

abortion as an easy way out. It is my understanding that the pro-choice or pro-abortion faction is pressuring, more or less, for an amendment of this type. Since this Bill neither discourages abortion nor discourages women from getting into circumstances of an unintended or unexpected pregnancy, it seems that some people are content with a sky-rocketing abortion rate. I believe that will be precisely the effect of this Bill.

Can a responsible Government consider this as an alternative? It is obvious to me that, all moral convictions aside, this Bill is quite simply bad policy. An abortion is a traumatic and emotionally difficult event, regardless of the conviction of women who choose to undergo the ordeal. This Bill is badly designed policy. It increases the frequency of these events, regardless of what other goals are aimed at in the process.

● (1820)

The vocal minority calling for abortion on demand is infecting our society like a degenerative disease. When I say this, I do not apologize for using words that might be considered harsh or blunt. It is common for people in favour of abortion on demand to say that I am being insensitive to the needs of problems of people who find themselves facing difficult and complex moral decisions. Unfortunately, it has become popular to define sensitive as an inclination to pass over what people see as moral or even as in their best interest and to dwell on what people want. It is now considered insensitive to insist that people might just have to put up with certain difficulties.

The disease that is infecting our entire political system is most evident in the abortion debate. This hinges on the prevalent view that Canadians are neither required nor wish to be held accountable for their actions. People are insisting on rights without acknowledging responsibilities. The Hon. Member for Burnaby and his whole Party seemingly are not willing to tell Canadians that there is a bottom line of accountability. This set of attitudes, primarily characterized by the theme of no accountability and no responsibility, can explain equally well why we have both a burgeoning abortion rate and a spiralling federal deficit.

Tonight this House has an opportunity not only to repudiate abortion on demand, but at the same time to indicate that Canadians as a whole believe there are more constructive ways to deal with the pressures encountered through life than by giving in to them.

The laws of a society must reflect its highest moral aspirations. The Bill before the House involves a practical compromise with a growing tendency. When laws are changed to accommodate unacceptable practices, invariably those practices become acceptable conventions and create new norms. As legislators, Mr. Speaker, we must accept the challenge to make laws that will have the best possible effect on Canada and Canadians.

Dr. Harley Smyth is an eminent physician at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He is well respected for his sensitivity, compassion and defence of medical ethics. I would