

*Criminal Code*

deal with different clauses of the bill in detail, and as a result there will be no repetition by members of this party. As a group we wish to talk about the entire bill, and it is up to the individuals in our party to choose the various clauses on which they wish to speak.

With the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) I was a member of the health and welfare committee which studied abortion in 1967-68. It has fallen to me to deal with the abortion section which, from remarks so far heard in this debate, appears to be the most contentious section of the entire bill. Some hon. members of our caucus, in common with members of other caucuses, are deeply disturbed by some of the amendments. They want no part of legislation designed to deal with abortion. We appreciate their position and honour their adherence to what they believe to be right. Yet we disagree profoundly with them. We also have principles and we also must speak on behalf of those things we believe to be right.

One of the most compelling reasons for one to support the amendments pertaining to abortion is to allow those who believe in the concept of abortion the right to follow the dictates of their consciences and remain within the law. Today they do not have this right. I believe the majority of the Canadian people wish to have that right. According to the only Gallup poll I could find on this question—it was taken in 1965—71 per cent of the Canadian people wanted the abortion laws to be modernized. I cannot believe that that figure is lower now.

Not many members of this house have had direct experience of abortion. I know that neither the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) nor I have undergone an abortion. But that should not prevent our dealing with the question of abortion. Because we may not be in any danger of falling over a cliff should not prevent our agreeing to provide an ambulance for those who have done so.

We have heard much in this debate from hon. members opposed to abortion. Let them think well of what their remarks entail. Do they insist on imposing their views on those who consider it their right to follow their consciences in this matter? No one will force abortions on people opposed to them. No one is proposing to force physicians who do not approve of abortions to perform abortions. Those who oppose the concept of a woman's right to an abortion ought to realize that public crime and private sin are entirely different

matters. On this question I commend the insight of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), because he was quite right in saying the law has no business in the bedrooms of the nation.

I agree with the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) who said that if our statute books contain unenforceable laws the law will fall into disrepute. The law pertaining to abortion is unenforceable. That point was brought home by religious as well as non-religious groups opposed to our party's stand on this question. Our position was that since an unenforceable law brings the law into disrepute the present law on abortion, being unenforceable, bringing the law into disrepute.

Moreover, I submit that as well as being unenforceable the present law is unjust. At present a pregnant woman may obtain an abortion in Canada safely, not legally but safely, if she has the money for the operation. Or she may obtain an abortion by taking a ship or aeroplane to another country where abortion is legal. On the other hand, while the present law is retained the pregnant woman without money has no such option. She must bear her child no matter whether it has resulted from rape, incest, accident or any one of a number of causes ruinous to her future and her health. She must bear the child or seek an illegal abortion with all the attendant risks of infection, mutilation and death. Those are her alternatives.

I am glad the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) is seeking to abolish a law which, in effect, means there is one law for the rich pregnant woman and another for the poor pregnant woman. A law like that ought to be swept away. It makes criminals of pregnant women who are caught in the trap of pregnancy and need to have an abortion. It makes criminals of doctors seeking to help pregnant women. Recently in Vancouver a highly respected doctor was convicted of performing abortions and was evicted from his profession. He performed abortions only because he could not bear the suffering of unfortunate women who could not face the consequences of their rash acts, and I emphasize the fact that they have not done that rash act alone. I point out that in no instance where an abortion has come to the attention of any hospital board has the pregnant woman alone been responsible for her condition. It has taken a man as well as the woman to bring about that condition. Society must deal with this problem instead of leaving, in many cases, poor,