

they were in our youth. Sexual experimentation often starts between children, and intercourse is common in early teenage years. Indeed, we know there is increasing evidence of teenage prostitution involving both boys and girls and very young teenagers on the streets today. Increasing numbers of young people view this as a means of getting money, something which is only possible, Mr. Speaker, because of the demands of adults who seek this service.

There is an alarming increase in the number of children under age 15 who are becoming parents. I would like to quote from the *Vancouver Sun* of October 14 which ran an article on this subject. It begins as follows:

A report on teenage pregnancy and parenthood in B.C. reveals an alarming increase in pregnancies among girls age 14 and younger—  
—it urges the development of more school and community programs to prevent unwanted pregnancies—

'—a 33 per cent increase in the rate of pregnancies for girls 14 years old and younger has occurred in British Columbia over the past seven years'—

The increase in pregnancies among young teenagers coincides with a marked decrease in the number of children given up for adoption. The report found more than half of the teenagers giving birth in B.C. are unmarried, and 75 to 80 per cent of teenage mothers now decide to keep their babies—

Deaths from complications of pregnancy are 60 per cent higher for girls under 15 than for women in their 20s—

The death rate for infants in B.C. . . . for the babies of 15-year olds was 26.1 . . . babies of mothers 16 and younger are more likely to be mentally retarded or have brain and nervous disorders.

A recent study of 79 teenage mothers in Vancouver revealed that 80 per cent had not finished high school and nearly 23 per cent had Grade 8 or less—

The death rate of preschoolers of teenage mothers was 41 per cent above average—

This shows how difficult it is for young mothers to care for babies. The article decries the attitude that giving services to these girls is seen as a reward for their misdemeanor:

'As a result, they're condemned to a life of isolation and poverty'.

● (1720)

Dr. Tonkin was quoted as saying he found 87 per cent of teenage pregnancies are unplanned and unwanted. He further said:

B.C.'s high teenage abortion rate of 106 abortions for every 100 teenagers who go through with the pregnancy is further evidence that most pregnancies are unwanted.

Birth control counselling to prevent unwanted pregnancy is not available to many teenagers.

I am sure we all agree that prevention is a top priority, particularly for young people faced with this kind of situation. No one disagrees that a child mother finds it hard to care for herself and mature into an adult while looking after a young child, meeting its needs and caring for it. Therefore, prevention is our first priority.

### Abortion

Our party strongly supports the recommendations of the Bagley report which my colleague from Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) has mentioned several times in this House. That report stresses prevention, family planning clinics, availability of contraceptives and accessibility to medical services for those who apply for abortions. We feel it particularly important to give more attention to community clinics. I understand these are increasing in the province of Quebec with excellent results. It is important that such community clinics be established so that there is accessibility to information, counselling and family support services for those women who decide to keep their babies.

If a woman becomes pregnant against her will, she should be able to discuss this with an objective, understanding counsellor and perhaps a religious adviser. She should come to her own decision as to what is best for her and her unborn child. She should have access to a doctor's advice if, as one alternative, she is considering an abortion. We should be looking at the clinics in Quebec as an alternative to placing a heavy burden on hospitals and the very costly services which are required.

Family planning is a social responsibility just as the increasing cost of caring for unwanted children is an increasing social cost. Last year I spoke about the need for a more democratic and realistic approach to the whole question of abortion. I respect the fact that members in this House, including some of my colleagues, have different opinions on this matter. I respect their personal opinions. However, the private member's bill before us today is not just a personal thing. It seeks to impose and restrict access to abortion. The women of this country must make their own decision in this matter.

I wish to direct some questions to the member presenting this bill. First, if the bill were to go through, would it stop the increasing number of teenage pregnancies which I just cited? Would it prevent pregnant women with money, or their sexual partners who have money, from going across the border to the United States to seek an abortion? Would it decrease the number of backroom butchers who are now performing abortions in areas where there is no access to proper medical treatment in a hospital with an approved abortion committee? Would it decrease in the cities the increasing numbers of unwanted pregnancies, particularly among younger women? Of course it would not prevent these things. The hon. member who just spoke would probably agree. It is a further restriction on access to abortion.

**Mr. McKnight:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like clarification. The hon. member said she would like to ask some questions of the hon. member sponsoring this bill. Would she like me to reply to those questions?

**Mrs. Mitchell:** No, Mr. Speaker, not at this point. I was just about to answer them. The hon. member had his time. This is a very important question and I would like full advantage of my time.