

*Abortion*

subject; if I am not mistaken, nearly 100 000 abortions are performed every year in Canada. However, their number varies considerably from one region to another. The access and the criteria also varies considerably. The interpretation of the regulations was very liberal in some places and very conservative in others, and there were places where the matter was just not considered at all. These regulations had tragic repercussions in many ways since they created situations that were totally discriminatory. There were cases where the lady, the young woman who wanted an abortion could get one without any problem or restriction as opposed to other regions, other places where it was definitely impossible and unacceptable to get an abortion, very often even when it was justified.

● (1840)

That is a reality which we must, I think, take into consideration. It is a reality which must be taken into account in any debate like the one we are having in this House.

Here is another reality. I have three sons of whom I am very proud, three sons who have given me and obviously still give me the joys of fatherhood, of family life. I am obviously aware that my view in this matter is somewhat biased, given the fact that my experience of the family unit is not, admittedly, the general rule.

As a practicing lawyer, I have seen young couples who, not being able to have children and knowing that a woman was about to give birth, have asked me to take the necessary steps in order to get a private adoption. These couples were absolutely distressed, absolutely traumatized by their incapacity to have children and were hoping to adopt a child. In the light of these experiences, I have come to the conclusion that I am definitely pro-life, in the sense that I am systematically and staunchly opposed to what could be called abortion on request.

Yet, although I feel somewhat uncomfortable, I must be candid about it and recognize that no matter how much experience or knowledge I may have as a man, there is no way I could describe or define what a woman might go through at a time when beside being pregnant she must face harsh, cruel and painful realities, such as the possible loss of her job. I do not think that a man can understand what a woman goes through in such a situation.

There are circumstances where a woman, for economic reasons, cannot even consider, either directly or indirectly, the possibility of living a reasonably decent life with a child.

Such is also the situation of any young girl who suddenly realizing that she is pregnant is deeply traumatized by the thought that her parents might find out—and I could go on and on like this—Therefore I feel that under these quite particular circumstances, I am not qualified as a man to appreciate what women go through in such circumstances. However, I think that as legislators, we must deal with this issue, and that is why I said at the outset of my remarks that it is unfortunate that we should address this important issue through a simple motion which, really, does not solve anything.

I think that, as lawmakers, we had and still have the obligation to propose to the Canadian public a framework which is more complete and thorough, in order to develop eventually a society where a person faced with such an important decision will not be alone, but will be able to rely on sufficient resources readily available to overlook all the constraints which I listed before.

As a matter of fact, the situation in a great many respects is quite unacceptable, because there is hardly any place where a woman could seek the advice of resource people about the possibility of keeping her child. I feel that, quite the contrary, over the past few years, many women have been using abortion as a means of family planning.

These days it has become a rather simple exercise. I was even told that a young secondary school student could indeed enter the school at 1 p.m. and leave three hours later after having an abortion without her parents being told about it. I suggest that over the years there has been totally unwarranted and intolerable acceptance and that it is incumbent upon us as legislators and Government spokesmen, not to make the decision on behalf of women, for that is their personal choice, but to propose solutions, provide financial resources and do everything we can to defend and support the cause so that people will more readily think in terms of pro-life rather than follow what appears to have been the prevailing trend over the past few years and say not to worry, it is always possible to have an abortion.

Personally, I think it is important to say where I stand on this issue. I feel that in such particular and specific situations as when the health of the mother is at stake, when her health is involved, then we should have no hesitation and let the woman, the mother make up her own mind. In the resolution I refer to a consultation with the attending physician. I am not sure that is the ideal formula, for the very simple reason that there is a danger of reverting to the situation that prevailed some time ago, namely that some have more conscience than others, disparities will exist depending on which province or area you live in, so much so that eventually, for lack of a very specific framework, there will be situations where unfortunately there will be basic disparities or discrimination, under which the well-off can find services that may not necessarily be available in their own areas. I think that specific aspect is of vital importance when discussing this major issue. All Canadian women without exception, in all areas, in all provinces without any exception, should be able to rely on a framework within which they are equal, regardless of their place of origin of their place of residence.

The other aspect, and I think this was the subject of a number of speeches, the fact of becoming pregnant by reason of a criminal act, Mr. Speaker, again is a situation where the mother should have the unequivocal right to decide whether she should continue or stop the child's development.

Mr. Speaker, there is also an important question that eventually will have to be solved in my view, that is the time