

Criminal Code

Mr. Godin: Mr. Speaker, I need only one more minute.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Godin: It is very brief, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The time of the hon. member is over.

The hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte).

Mr. Matte: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be called to order too often, because we realize that on the other side of the house, even if they do not want to listen to our speeches carefully, seriously, they watch us closely in an effort to catch us up.

And your role, Mr. Speaker, becomes extremely difficult, I agree. You cannot possibly know every thing. You are not a walking encyclopedia and consequently how can you judge every technical, medical, scientific or other question, while saying at the same time that we are within the subject or not? That is far from easy.

It is quite understandable, Mr. Chairman, that we should sometimes get away from the subject, at this stage of the debate that has been lasting for weeks. We are so deeply involved in the subject that even for a simple amendment we have at the tips of our fingers all the relevant arguments.

While considering the amendment introduced by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), we are still in the realm of the subject I believe, when we bring forth all possible arguments to prove that it is very important that the advisory committee, in an accredited hospital, should prove that it has all the required qualifications to perform abortion. We want this committee to make decisions but only when we are reasonably sure—I do not say absolutely sure, but reasonably sure—that it will be able to avoid making mistakes and yielding to sentimental pressures and blackmail.

The purpose of the amendment now before us and which is closely related to the amendment discussed earlier is just to avoid that.

I want here to congratulate and thank the hon. member for Brandon-Souris for having considered the question of abortion from a point of view which is very much the same as ours. He certainly deserves to be congratulated for his amendment goes, at least in some

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard).]

ways, a little further still than the previous one and I quote:

"Therapeutic abortion committee" for any hospital means a committee comprised of not less than four members, two whom shall be qualified medical practitioners and one a psychiatrist appointed by the board of that hospital, as well as a clergyman, or spiritual advisor where this is requested by the patient for the purpose of considering and determining questions relating to terminations of pregnancy within that hospital."

Mr. Speaker, we realize, in reading this amendment, the continuing concern of those who, in this house, radically oppose abortion as such. They want to protect people, to the best of their ability, so that if, unfortunately, abortion were accepted as such, we would know at least that every care has been taken to avoid every kind of abuse.

We understand very well the recommendations made a moment ago by the minister when he said that, personally, he was quite in favour of the suggestion, but that there was no need of including it in the bill since it would be done through a simple advisory board without it being indicated in the law.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the minister thinks he is smarter than the law but it is unfortunately common knowledge that i's should be dotted and that t's should be crossed—and more particularly so here, taking into account the experiences undergone elsewhere. It is essential to dot the i's, rather than rely on the fact that there will be advisors, people who will have to think things over, to sound their conscience and to ponder upon a possible abortion. Will qualified physicians then go and take the advice of clergymen and psychiatrists? Are we to expect such a thing? This is not good enough, not by a long shot. That is why the amendment becomes important, if not essential, for who will agree to abortion?

It has been said ever so often—and I will say it again—that according to duly qualified medical practitioners, cases where the mother's life must be weighed against the life of the foetus she bears in her womb, are extremely rare; there may be three cases out of ten thousand. Consequently in 20 cases of abortion, consideration and advice will not be sought for purely medical and scientific reasons. Therefore, the committee that will have to decide must be apprised of all the factors, in order not to be tricked by those who would try by every possible means to procure a legal abortion.