

*Criminal Code*

—that the doctors who decide, after serious consideration within their hospital committee, to approve a therapeutic abortion be no longer considered guilty of that act under the Criminal Code.

In effect, it is the safeguard of their integrity and of their profession that it is sought to ensure. I go on quoting:

We believe that scientific medical research alone can bring the true solution to this problem, and we favour the setting up of any study committee.

One can see, Mr. Speaker, that these are not ordinary men speaking, but real professionals. And they are telling us that medical experts alone can express their views on that question. But if we decide to pass a legislation, even though the doctors themselves ask that we should not legislate now, because scientific and medical research are still not advanced enough, we will be disregarding the advice of these experienced men.

The report goes on, and I quote:

—that abortion, in the present state of medical science, is still considered killing a human being; that every doctor or hospital should be free to refuse to take part in that medical practice.

That is the very purpose of the amendment before us. After having studied this bill, doctors considered all that had been said on the subject for the last few months. This is the reason why they thought fit to advise those who will have to make a decision on the course to follow. I am reading on:

—that this technique where the life of a human being (foetus) is at stake, the decision must not be left to the patient alone.

—We are against a bill which would give rise to false hopes among the population.

We furthermore ask that hospital, authorized to perform therapeutic abortions, be appointed by medical associations in every province to ensure the quality of the established standards.

Mr. Speaker, the question I was putting earlier to the hon. minister was precisely presenting the same view point. We are dealing with the public health, which is a provincial responsibility. And if this legislation is contrary to the set standards, the mentality and the established rules according to the views of the doctors of a particular province, especially in the case of Quebec, it is undoubtedly going against current opinion.

This is another reason for doctors to object, and of course I fully support such an attitude.

And the Association concludes as follows:

● (3:50 p.m.)

This is why the Q.A.H.M.B. is against the present text of the amendment C-195 and wants it to be amended in order to restrict its provisions to the cases where the mother's life is seriously jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, when we examine the amendment requiring that nothing in the clause be construed so as to make compulsory for a hospital to establish a committee dealing with therapeutic abortion or for a qualified medical practitioner to procure the miscarriage of a female person, we can see the tremendous importance of that amendment. Why? Because it deals with the individuals who are most intimately involved in the problem. I refer, of course to the medical practitioners themselves. When physicians demand to be protected by us, we should consider their request seriously.

I am told that the situation never arises, that an accomplished fact is merely being sanctioned; that the attitude of Catholic hospitals is being explained; that we live in a pluralistic society. We recognize all that.

Mr. Speaker, we are not dealing here with a matter of religion, but one of conscience. It is a question of mentality. Why not respect the various ways of seeing things? I repeat that we should follow the advice given to us, almost pathetically, by the doctors themselves who are trying to make us understand that we are trespassing on their grounds.

We have dealt only with the social aspect of the question, when the only thing that really matters in fact is whether or not one should approve abortion.

It is imperative that we should know whether we are dealing with a human being or not, whether or not there is murder when the foetus is killed. Doctors or scientists only can tell us that.

Now, they themselves tell us to be careful. They say that the progress of medicine is such that we must prevent major errors being committed by legislating on matters which, not only do not concern us, but concern only the doctor and his patient.

To go back to the Quebec Association of Hospital Medical Boards, and more specifically to the brief it presented on the omnibus bill. For over 20 years now, that Association has represented hospital doctors in that province. We are therefore not dealing with just anybody, not with the members of the Ralliement créditiste, nor layment in this regard. The medical board is the organization which, in every hospital, groups all the doctors who practice there.

Recently, following the introduction of the government bill on abortion, this Association consulted all its members, by writing to them, or on the occasion of meetings called to