

Government Orders

psychological health would be under threat and now she would be entitled to it.

Basically, what the member is saying is that every woman under this legislation is entitled to abortion. First, I would like the member to tell me if the concept that is used is that she is denied, she is now psychologically upset about it, and therefore now she is entitled—the chicken and egg situation—under what circumstances does he see a woman would not be able to get an abortion? Are there any? If there aren't any, why is the bill not simply amended by using the words that state that “unless the abortion is induced or performed by or under the direction of a medical practitioner”—period, and striking out the rest of it altogether?

If we are saying that that is what the intent is, and some people over there seem to be kidding themselves that that is what the intent is and what the end result is going to be, then why do we not just cut the bill off and strike out all the words about health and life and threats and just say as long as it is performed under the supervision of a medical practitioner, period?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérin: Thank you for your question. However, I already answered most of the question at the beginning of my speech when I said that in 1986, I voted on seven different motions. Since I found none were acceptable, I voted against all seven.

• (1730)

Since 1986, I have come to the conclusion that we must reach a compromise that takes into account the basic principles of my philosophy, and those basic principles are reflected in this Bill. Fine, in your case, you may wish to see a limit of 17 weeks and 3 days, but you may get only 6 or 7 Members to vote in favour of your proposal, and you will never get that kind of legislation through the House. And by the end of the debate, we still wouldn't have any legislation, while the vast majority of Canadians not only want legislation, they want their Members to produce specific provisions in the form of a bill. So there is a lot of truth in what you say, but you want a bill that is a perfect reflection of your ideas and concerns. However, we must go beyond this desire for perfection which will never get a consensus in this House and produce something that will be acceptable to you just the same and which will help give Canadians what

they want most, which is legislation that reflects all the basic principles you support.

[*English*]

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise to speak on Bill C-43, an act respecting abortion.

My leader, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, has already indicated that there will be a free vote within the Liberal party because this is a non-partisan issue.

I must state at the outset that this bill is a grave disappointment and I cannot support it as it is. However, like my leader, I will support it going to a legislative committee so that amendments may be heard from all disciplines, so that we may seek clarification and improvements, so that we may examine the need to delineate the services that the women of our country need.

This issue, indeed, is most crucial and complex. It has been intensely debated for almost two years now and has even led to civil strife.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare, yesterday, in debating this issue indicated: “Sensationalizing individual lives cannot possibly provide the thoughtfulness, wisdom and judgment necessary to develop a bill which respects the rights of all Canadians, especially when those rights come into conflict with one another”. I agree.

However, I must state that this government has delayed presenting legislation on abortion to this House for an unacceptably long period of time. The bill that we now have, as is, has not clarified anything. At best, it has only clarified issues vaguely. It does not protect Canadians in the womb of their mothers nor the mothers themselves.

Let us remind ourselves that once we members of Parliament were in the womb of our mothers. Had they aborted us we would not be here to be able to debate this fundamental issue.

This government states that Bill C-43 strikes a balance between the right of women to personal freedom and privacy and the state's interest in protecting the right of the unborn to life, that this bill is a balanced approach. This is not true. How can it be a balance when it compromises both rights?