

Abortion

I see that you are indicating to me, Mr. Speaker, that I have only one more minute left. I wonder if I could beg the indulgence of the House to continue my remarks and finish my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow reasonable time for the Hon. Member to complete his remarks?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Blaikie: We have now a new debate, hardly begun, about whether or not, if personal choice is to be favoured, this personal choice extends to making choices not about whether or not to have a child but what kind of child to have. The prospect of women having abortions, not because they do not want children but because they want different children than those conceived, opens up a whole new arena of decision making which, in my view, should not be uncritically assumed even by pro-choice people to be adequately dealt with within the moral framework of personal choice even at the earliest stages of pregnancy.

Are pro-choice people, whose arguments may have been overtaken by genetic diagnosis and technology, really saying that the community is not entitled to have any say about any standards or regulations for what will be acceptable in this whole new range of possibilities? The possibility of gender selection becoming an acceptable practice is certainly one possibility, but there may be others. The extension of the consumer ethic to babies is something that I oppose. Designer babies should not be the wave of the future.

This is a dimension which I think the pro-choice community has not thought through and which I hope it will think through very soon, as indeed all of us should, for it is an area of new developments which have been largely left to the no doubt well intentioned but *ad hoc* decisions of doctors and scientists.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has called for a Royal commission into all the questions posed by new reproductive technologies, and I think such a study is now absolutely necessary, precisely because there are questions to be answered that neither pro-life nor pro-choice people have addressed. The compromise we have before us is a compromise based on the current state of the debate, a debate which may be dated by new technologies.

The question of the use of foetal tissue for medical purposes is another issue. The government motion which provides effectively for abortion on demand in the earliest stage has not addressed these new realities. It is in this respect that I am tempted to vote against it. However, I have not made up my mind.

I will not be able to touch on all aspects of my thinking on this issue, but I would like to say a few more words about my critique of the assumptions and implications of the pro-choice rhetoric. For instance, some pro-choice rhetoric calls into question the validity of religious arguments *per se*. I may disagree with some of the religious arguments offered by my pro-life colleagues on the other side, but their arguments are not wrong just because they are religious. I have my own

arguments from a religious viewpoint and I would not want them dismissed just because they are religious. All arguments are religious in the sense that they are based on some claim about ultimate reality, including the arguments of the pro-choice groups, unless they want to maintain that their arguments are just unfounded opinions. The attempt to make religious arguments inadmissible in public debate is something I will not support in any way.

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In the end, such abortions as may be permitted by any new law can only be described as tragedies, certainly not as liberation; in some cases as sin as opposed to crime; and in many cases as reflection of a larger and more deep-seated pragmatism about human life that has its worst manifestation in the so-called "practical" dictates or a foreign and defence policy supported by many, although obviously not all, pro-life leaders of incinerating all the children of the world, born and unborn, in a nuclear war fought to preserve our standard of living based, as it is, on our privileged position in the global economy which makes many poor that we might continue to be affluent.

That would be the ultimate sin of material convenience and the mercy of God will be much less available to those who commit that sin than it is to the many women who have chosen abortion, as indeed was the mercy of Jesus himself much more available to the woman caught in adultery, an offence then punishable by death, than it was to the Pharisees or the powers and the principalities who were very good at seeing the sliver in the eyes of others but could not see the beam in their own.

The only people who have a self-righteous leg to stand on in this debate are those who live in voluntary poverty, who are against capital punishment, and who are pacifists on the issue of war. I do not fall into that category, nor do I claim to. It is only those who do who have what I would call a self-righteous leg to stand on.

There are many more things I could say, Mr. Speaker, and I regret that I am unable to do so. I would not want to push the tolerance of my colleagues any further than I have. I look forward to another opportunity to put the rest of what I have to say on the record.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Calgary South): Mr. Speaker, today and tomorrow we are debating Motion No. 36 in order to get the sense of the House on the abortion issue. This is a very complex issue. It is a sensitive, moral, and religious issue.

I do not believe in abortion on demand. I do not believe that abortion should be used as a method of birth control. I strongly believe that abortion is a matter between a woman, her God, and her physician, and it should be permitted up to and including the eighteenth week of pregnancy. Of course, if the mother's life is physically or mentally at risk at any time, termination of the pregnancy should be permitted. An abortion is a medical procedure and should only be performed by a licensed physician in a licensed facility.