

cut-back of funding to the Planned Parenthood Federation was that the provinces would pick up the slack. Well, in fact, the provinces have not picked up the slack and we have seen a very serious erosion in the provision of information about family planning, contraception and, of course, in sex education as well. This erosion is in direct contradiction to the spirit of the 1969 amendments to the Criminal Code.

That is a particularly serious problem in certain jurisdictions such as the Province of Saskatchewan where the provincial Conservative Government is actively promoting the removal of birth control information from the shelves of health centres. In fact, one of the pamphlets that the Conservative Government of Saskatchewan has removed was produced by the federal Department of National Health and Welfare. While that Government purports to be trying to reduce the number of abortions, by reducing access to information about sex education and family planning it is increasing the likelihood that there will be more abortions, particularly among young girls.

I want to speak for a moment as well, Mr. Speaker, about an individual whom I consider to be one of the most courageous men in Canada in the struggle for full freedom of choice, that is, Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Dr. Henry Morgentaler has been acquitted now by four juries and yet the injustice goes on, the trials continue. I want to stand here in the House today and say that Dr. Henry Morgentaler has done a tremendous service for Canadian women by being prepared to offer safe therapeutic abortions, in many cases to women who would have no access were his service not available. I am proud of the fact that Canadian jurists have been prepared to recognize the contribution that he has made. Of course, the legal battle—the struggle which costs so much—continues. But Dr. Henry Morgentaler, in his fight for safe therapeutic abortions, I believe should be commended. His fight for the right of women to have the choice for safe medical abortions without committees, without judgments and without delays is an objective which I share. I believe Dr. Morgentaler should be commended for assisting Canadian women in trying to achieve that important objective.

● (1810)

I would note as well that the provisions of the Criminal Code which allow for an appeal from an acquittal by a jury should be overturned by the Government. Both in the United States and Britain, there is no possibility whatsoever of this kind of harassment through the judicial system. In fact, if an individual is acquitted then that acquittal stands. They are not put through the difficulty and expense of another jury trial.

The position that I have taken in support of freedom of choice is one which is shared by many Canadians. I would hope that the Government would be prepared to recognize the fact that in the most recent Gallop poll in 1982, some 72 per cent of Canadians called upon the Government to ensure access to safe therapeutic abortions. While I do not believe that Governments should run by Gallop poll, in this particular case I think it would be of some assistance to the Government.

Criminal Code

[Translation]

I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that even though in the Province of Quebec there are clinics set up by Dr. Morgentaler, Quebec women perhaps have better access to abortion services than their other Canadian sisters, but they still are far from enjoying the right to a free abortion. For instance, in many Quebec areas, services are not available, and the Quebec Federation of Family Planning has emphasized that the law should be changed so that women could have access to safe abortions. Also, some hospitals still refuse abortions to married women or women who are not on the pill or do not use the IUD.

I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, what the impact will be if there is a change of Government in Quebec, if for instance the New Democratic Party does not win the elections or if by a stroke of luck the Quebec Liberal Party wins the elections. We must ask ourselves whether such a Government would respect the right of Quebec women to have access to safe abortions.

[English]

This is a difficult issue. It is an issue which has divided many communities and one on which Members of all Parties can express very strong convictions. However, let me close by quoting from a lecturer from the Toronto School of Theology, who speaks about the very difficult ethical questions in this area of abortion. He says:

The overall ethical thrust of the Bible is on the side of personal responsibility and the freedom to shape one's life as an adult rather than as a child living in enforced dependency. It is opposed to any and all forms of coercion.

Theologically speaking, God has given us the right and duty to follow our own conscience. This means, ultimately, having the right to be (what others may regard as) wrong.

It is easy for commentators and preachers—most of whom are male and many of whom are celibate—to label women who seek an abortion as selfish, hedonistic, or lacking a certain "generosity of spirit." Some may well be. Most are not. They are painfully choosing the lesser of two evils and it is cruel, in pious phrases, to add guilt to their distress.

This position is not "pro-abortion"—nobody in their right mind waves a banner urging anyone to promote this route and it only muddies the issue to cling to any of the clichéd slogans of either side in this debate. It is, however, pro-compassion, pro-freedom, pro a fully moral, fully human life for the women of Canada and of the world.

That is from Tom Harpur who is a freelance writer and broadcaster who lectures at the Toronto School of Theology.

In closing, I want to briefly underline the reasons for my support of this Bill and support of freedom of choice. The present law is unworkable. It is unevenly and unfairly applied. Even if we were to adopt the suggestions of some and in fact return to the days when all abortions were illegal, this would simply ensure that abortions continued but would take place at the hands of the back-street butchers or at the hands of desperate women themselves. That certainly has been shown to be the case very clearly in jurisdictions such as Portugal where abortions are illegal today. Yet, they continue in conditions of very serious risk to the women involved.

I note as well that at present there is no contraceptive that is 100 per cent safe and 100 per cent effective. Human beings are not infallible and safe legal abortion is essential as a back