

conceptions and has a long history. As you know, abortion is nothing new. It has been performed ever since homo sapiens walked the earth and woman found herself in an undesirable state, in her opinion. Being ingenious, the old wives soon found ways to start an abortion, anything from aknitting needle to a twig, and then finally bits of bark and things which would swell after insertion. There are all sorts of ways of doing it, and of course in many cases these caused infections and a great deal of danger to the pregnant woman.

● (1710)

Abortion was carried out in back rooms and dark corridors. We all know those stories. However, people today do not worry too much about ethics, moral values and that sort of thing. I would say half the population has that outlook, whether it is about abortion or anything else. We have to admit that everybody is mildly dishonest. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, for always alluding to my early years in practice, but they were interesting years. I remember that in my first year of practice I was out on one occasion looking after some confinements, travelling by horse and cutter. A woman came to my house and asked if the doctor was in. My wife replied, no. The woman then said, "I guess you will do. How do I get rid of a baby?" That was just straight talk, and it was common among a certain group of people. They never felt badly about it. This woman wanted to get rid of a baby, and she thought my wife knew everything about it. In those days abortion was practised, but in dark rooms and in a clandestine manner.

Now, in our modern times—I do not say they are any better than the old times in some ways—abortion can be performed in a very slick manner. It can be performed in illegal clinics or whatever. As everybody knows, the big argument is that the wealthy can get abortions when they want, and the poor cannot. This is an argument we cannot play with; we have to decide what we are doing. We all know the changes that have occurred in hospitals, and in attitudes toward abortions and sterilizations. I rather deplore the easy approach to sterilization. It has almost become available on demand. I do not think it should; I do not think abortion should be done on demand either, by any means.

At present the question of abortion goes to a committee, and I hope this approach will continue. A committee has to consider the danger to the mother, and the desirability from the standpoint of society. Perhaps doctors should not have the right to decide these things, but so far nobody else wants to get into these discussions. I think that possibly the types of people on the committees should be broadened. I believe that, for the good of society, some control over abortion should be retained. We have gotten into this question of abortion, of abortion on demand, because of changes that have taken place in society in the last number of years. There is no doubt that we are living in a permissive society. As I say, Mr. Speaker, abortions were known, if not condoned, since the dawn of history, and the same holds true with respect to contraception.

Contraception has never been accepted in certain circles, although it is more or less accepted now even by religious denominations. Contraception has been condoned really because the question of a newly formed life, or a so-called life, is not involved. Contraception itself is,

### *Abortion Plebiscite Act*

of course, questionable if we really feel that anything once begun should be immutable and unchanged, and that we should never modify what nature starts. But of course none of us really believe that, completely. Now that medical science is able to produce a contraceptive pill which can be taken by mouth, every woman of child bearing age would be rather foolish, if she believes in this progressive society, not to take the pill. However, I think all these things are making the question of abortion easier for people to accept.

I think you have to realize that there are many things in the world today which have to be settled by common consent before certain practices are adopted. Long ago world population began to increase by geometric progression. We are right now in danger of over population, not just in countries such as China and India but also in Canada. However, we do not have to accept abortion on demand to deal with that problem. Contraception is good enough. The birth rate has gone down in most western countries and, surprisingly enough, we had a good debate about that on the bill on family allowances. It was interesting to see how the provinces had changed their attitudes. It was very interesting to me to see how the birth rate in Quebec, which up to 20 years ago was noted for its large families, has declined to the point of being among the lowest, if not the lowest in Canada. This certainly reveals a change in attitude, and has nothing to do with the baby bonus.

But I must say that the world, through the United Nations and other world agencies, will have to introduce programs to reinforce family counselling, medical family planning, and all that sort of thing in every country so that we won't have overcrowding, so that we won't have so much difficulty in feeding the vast numbers of human beings that populate this planet. There is a great danger there. It is as great as the shortage of oil in the world today. We can look after the shortage of oil, but the other problem has not really been tackled yet.

When it comes to the question of why we should or should not condone abortion, I think we have to realize that even the religious and ethical views and "mores" of the world are changing. There are more and more people who are really quite conversant with the origin of life, the origin of, shall we say, the solar system, the origin of the universe, than ever before. We know that the sort of things we look at here, such as the wooden desks in front of us, are made up of atoms and electrons, and that one atom probably will have electrons going around it which are just as far away from the nucleus as the earth and the planets are from the sun, in a relative way. Therefore, what we think of as being solid, such as the desks, are really not solid. There are great spaces in this piece of wood in front of me that are completely invisible, even under the microscope.

Going right back to the ultimate there is nothing in this physical world but positive-negative charges of electricity, and these small bits of energy. What is energy? What is light? What is matter? And what are living people, living beings? What of the whole evolution of life which began a billion or 2 billion years ago? I refer of course to some very simple forms like bacteria, although it is not too simple, to the synthesis of proteins, and all these things which