

*Right to Life*

pregnancy rate in Ontario. In 1983 there were 42.3 pregnancies per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19 as compared to 60.4 pregnancies in 1959.

The nine-year overview proves that prevention works. It demonstrates that public prevention programs of sexuality education in school and family planning services in public health units have not caused adolescent pregnancy rates to rise. Furthermore, access to abortion services have not increased sexual irresponsibility that would cause adolescent pregnancy rates to rise. The study goes on to point out that young people who live in rural areas and poorer areas lack access to such family planning education in their schools. This is something which must be corrected.

In conclusion, I would like to make it very clear that I cannot support this motion. I think it would run counter to the best interests of the Canadian people. Instead, I call upon the Government to remove all references to abortion from the Criminal Code.

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell):** Madam Speaker, the topic which we are discussing this afternoon is not one on which one can be a political winner. It is not a vote-getting issue or a partisan issue. However, it is certainly a complex issue. The easiest thing for any Member to do would be not to speak at all. However, I do not believe that is what the people of our constituencies sent us here for. I was in the lobby earlier making telephone calls to constituents. I heard the debate taking place in the House and deliberately chose to come in and participate in it. This is at the same time a religious issue, a moral issue and a social issue.

*[Translation]*

Above all, Madam Speaker, it is more than a simple constitutional issue. I am sure the Hon. Member who is sponsoring the motion to amend the Canadian Constitution means well. Unfortunately I believe he is taking the wrong approach to make his point. Should a Member feel that the legislation respecting abortion ought to be changed, then I think this should be done through a Criminal Code provision rather than a constitutional amendment because, as I said earlier, we may be debating a number of issues this afternoon but honestly I do not believe we are now talking about a constitutional matter. We may be talking about many other things, but certainly not that one. If I may elaborate briefly on the constitutional aspect, it has been pointed out a moment ago that any amendment to the Constitution calls for consensus and agreement between the federal Government and a number of Canadian provinces—two-thirds of the provinces representing at least 50 per cent of all Canadians—plus a resolution of the House of Commons.

There is another aspect to be taken under consideration, Madam Speaker, namely that if we amend the Constitution, which then becomes subject to interpretation, I have serious reservations about the manner in which the motion or the constitutional amendment is worded. Members might seriously wonder what would be the consequences and the legal

implications. When for instance I see in this proposal the words "unborn human persons", I ask myself, not knowing the answer, whether there is such a thing as an unborn human person, if it is even possible to write such a self-contradictory thing. People might say that someone who is not yet born is not a human being, it is a human foetus, etc. Some may debate that point at some other time, but the fact remains that enacting a constitutional amendment and trying to see later how the courts will interpret it, would be an extremely dangerous way to go about it, according to the Hon. Member's intent. If the Hon. Member simply wants to ban abortion, this may be his choice—and I am not suggesting it is although I have a feeling this is probably what he intended—he might introduce an amendment to the Criminal Code. I must add that I would not agree to support such an amendment had he proposed it, but anyway such is not the situation now, judging from his speech.

● (1640)

*[English]*

It is also difficult to discuss this issue for religious reasons because some of us are of certain religious persuasions in which abortions are not permitted. I happen to belong to such a group. As a practising Roman Catholic, as a married person and a father, I am very concerned about the debate on this issue. On the one hand, I find it unusual that this afternoon, all Members except one who have spoken so far have been men who, of course, will never bear children. Women have had the opportunity to participate in this debate in the House this afternoon, but only one has done so.

The argument that has been made by others is that while it is true that only women bear children, the responsibility for those children does not lie with women alone, but rests with society collectively. Therefore, as legislators, be it men or women, we must state our views on this very difficult issue and others like it. Notwithstanding the fact that I would have appreciated hearing more contribution in the debate from some women Members of the House, I decided to speak because I feel very strongly that this motion should not proceed.

The current law as it pertains to abortions has attempted to cover the middle ground. There is the position that abortions should never occur, which is historically incorrect. Abortions have always taken place in spite of attempts to hide that fact.

The other position is that abortions should always be available and the decision should be left to the woman and her doctor. I have already explained why I disagree with that position.

I suggest that the present law is probably a just middle ground, although I do not believe it has always been administered according to its original intent. I suggest that the law is not administered uniformly. While this is not the only reason, it is a major cause of what is wrong with the present legislation. The law is interpreted differently in some provinces, some jurisdictions and even within some cities.