

*Abortion*

because it restricted debate; (b) because it did not provide for amendments; and, (c) because it placed a multiplicity of questions before the House at one time. I was convinced that we could meet the first two arguments: (a) the motion could be amended; and, (b) we were providing more time for debate than is normally allowed on a Bill, because Members are only allowed a 20-minute speech during the first eight hours of debate on a Bill.

I did agree, after much reflection, that a procedural point could be made for the case that the House should not be presented with a multiplicity of questions without the unanimous consent of the House. If the opposition Parties had agreed on consent, there would have been no problem. However, in the absence of consent, which it was in their right to withhold, there was a problem.

We did not want a sensitive, moral and religious issue debated after an acrimonious procedural debate. We felt that we should be debating the issue and not the procedure. That is the reason that I decided not to proceed on Monday, July 11, 1988. It was not the happiest day of my life and it is not the happiest decision that I had to make, but that is the decision that was made and that is why it was made. So we regrouped and decided to go with this present motion.

The preamble refers to the Supreme Court decision and suggests that the Government should prepare and introduce legislation consistent with the Constitution of Canada, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which reflects the fundamental value and inherent dignity of each human being, and the inherent worth of human life, and which achieves a balance between the right of a woman to liberty and security of her person, and the responsibility of society to protect the unborn.

The scope of the legislation proposed by the motion is—

*[Translation]*

Such legislation should prohibit the performance of an abortion, subject to the following exceptions:

When, during the earlier stages of pregnancy: a qualified medical practitioner is of the opinion that the continuation of the pregnancy of a woman would, or would be likely to, threaten her physical or mental well-being; when the woman in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner decides to terminate her pregnancy; and when the termination is performed by a qualified medical practitioner; and when, during the subsequent stages of pregnancy: the termination of the pregnancy satisfies further conditions, including a condition that after a certain point in time, the termination would only be permitted where, in the opinion of two qualified medical practitioners, the continuation of the pregnancy would, or would be likely to, endanger the woman's life or seriously endanger her health.

*[English]*

I understand that there was some discussion, after this motion was put on the Order Paper, by the opposition Parties.

I think it was helpful. I had some other remarks, but in view of the consent order I am not going to pursue them at this time. I would say that I understand that the motion has been criticized by both the leaders of the pro-choice side and the pro-life side. If that is the case, we have achieved our purpose, because we sought to favour neither side but to present a motion which could be the basis for debate. If both sides find fault, we have done our job. We did not seek to favour either side. We sought to frame a debate on an important issue. We sought a sense of the House.

The House will know, the public will know, that we have made certain changes to the normal rules. They are made on consent, and the debate will go forward in accordance with those rules.

I want to return to one point, if I may, and that is to point out that by moving by way of a motion we do provide every Member of the House with an opportunity to spend 20 minutes putting his or her view on the record. If we had proceeded by way of a Bill, only those Members speaking during the first eight hours of debate would have had the opportunity for a 20-minute speech.

I suggest that we have expanded the opportunity for debate.

**An Hon. Member:** We could have consented to more time.

**Mr. Lewis:** I want to deal with the tone of debate. The Members will know that a little over a year ago this House debated the controversial issue of capital punishment. At that time we suggested that each Member owed to society and to this House to debate that issue on as high a level as possible. That was not thought possible, and in fact some Members ridiculed the possibility. I suggest to you that the capital punishment debate was carried out without excessive acrimony and division, and I would suggest that the same guidelines apply to this debate. We owe it to each other, we owe it to the issue and we owe it to our constituents, to be both passionate and dispassionate in this debate—passionate as we present our point of view and dispassionate as we consider the viewpoints of others.

The time frame is set. We will extend hours to allow Members to speak, both tonight and tomorrow night. So the debate is set. I want to speak briefly, if I may, to the question of a free vote. Members on the government side will be free to vote as they wish on the motion and any amendments or subamendments. I think this is an issue, as was capital punishment, which demands or dictates a free vote. As I said before, it is a highly sensitive issue, a moral issue, a religious issue, and cuts across Party lines. Therefore, it is the essence of parliamentary reform when we say that we believe Members should be free to voice their own opinion as they speak and to vote as they wish on this issue.

● (1530)

In conclusion, I regret that my role in this debate does not permit me to speak to the issue, because I have very deeply