

*Government Orders*

One final point I would like to make is that permitting abortions in this fashion also ensures that women are free to choose to have the child. If abortions were made illegal and in some strange authoritarian society women were not able to choose to have a child, but were forced to continue their pregnancies, the tremendous joy of having a wanted child who is welcomed into the world as a blessing would be lost.

I think of the great joy I have had in my daughter. I think of other friends and relatives who have grappled with the issue and have chosen life. It is a good law and I look forward to considering it further.

**Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak in this historic debate this afternoon. We as legislators have a very important role to play in crafting a new abortion law for Canada.

I am of the firm belief that life begins at conception, and that the state has the responsibility to protect that life. Indeed, Mr. Justice Beetz wrote in the decision of January 28, 1988: "Parliament is justified in requiring a reliable, independent and medically sound opinion in order to protect the state interest in the foetus". Further, he stated, "Parliament requires this independent opinion because it is not only the woman's interest that is at stake in a decision to authorize an abortion".

I am here in this Chamber today by the good graces of the people of Canada. I believe the majority of my constituents are pro-life and they have elected me knowing that I too was pro-life. Like many other members, I have received over 3,000 letters in the last month urging me to follow my conscience and protect the unborn. I believe that I can do no less.

I have listened to many sincere speeches by members from both sides of this House. On Tuesday night, the hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources outlined his reasons for supporting this particular bill. I listened and I was moved.

But I am very troubled by the dilemma we face. It is this law or no law. It is an unfortunate and negative situation. It is also one that I cannot accept. If we support the bill for second reading, it means that we support the bill in principle. I believe this means that we

support abortion on demand. If we compromise on life itself, what is next?

• (1650 )

Each of us represents a special interest group, a group whose issue we speak out on. It could be farmers, seniors citizens, women, or small business people. Who speaks out for the unborn, those who have no voice? What interest group could be more special than a child as yet unborn? It is a crime to destroy the eggs of certain birds, yet it is acceptable to destroy a human being.

I share the views of my hon. friends for Leeds—Grenville and Bruce—Grey who spoke eloquently this week. The member for Leeds—Grenville mentioned that back in history if a woman was to be executed and was found to be pregnant the execution was delayed so that the baby could be born. Two people were involved, Mr. Speaker, not one.

I am not a lawyer or a university professor or someone who pretends to have all the answers. I am just a human being who listens to my constituents and follows my conscience. We hear about the limits on what may or may not be legal when it comes to abortion. We hear what may or may not be acceptable. We hear about what may or may not be worthy of a choice. Is morality not supposed to be a consideration? I believe that it should be.

I acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to impose morality in a law. Laws are supposed to be clear, objective, sterile and without emotion. For me, the issue of abortion is different. Anyone can hire a lawyer to try his or her case, but who speaks for the unborn? Perhaps that is the issue: Who speaks for the unborn? Our obligation as human beings is to protect the lives of others who are in no position to do so.

In the 122 years since Confederation, Parliament has never debated or voted on a question of such moral gravity. To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill's famous saying, we could say for Canada, with no fear of exaggeration, that never did so many human lives depend so much on so few.

This week we are debating a compromise bill. Some positive points can be seen in the new government bill.