

Criminal Code

However, at the request of the hon. member for Lotbinière, I wish to tell him I have taken as an insult his false utterings as regards the government members.

Of course, I have not the advantage of having a well-prepared speech. But this will perhaps enable me to give my own opinion rather than the views of others.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, if that may please the members of the Ralliement Créditiste, that at the outset, I had some doubts about the value of this bill. However, I thought I ought not rely on my personal opinion and I somewhat followed the method used by the honourable member for Lotbinière. I too held consultations throughout my constituency and throughout the ones adjacent to the Saguenay-Lake-St. John area.

I will say at the outset to the honourable member that I received a few letters, from my constituency only. To be honest, I must say those letters were not in favour of this bill, however, after consultations with civil and religious authorities, I must say quite frankly to my honourable friend that I was surprised at the comments I received.

I expected that the striking argument of our friends of the Ralliement Créditiste to the effect that life was a gift of the utmost importance and that morals should prevail in the vote that will be taken would prove to be the most convincing one.

To my great surprise, I got the following answer: that bill represents a permission, not an obligation. And by way of answering the hon. member for Lotbinière who said that there existed the following dilemma: either we were stupid, we members of the government, for not intervening in this debate, or we were inhuman. I think he forgot another option. Either the members who do not intervene are stupid or they are inhuman or idiotic. I regard as imbeciles those who cannot understand the extreme importance of this bill which represents a landmark in the Canadian life. I regard as an imbecile the man who could not make the people in his riding understand that this legislation was extremely advantageous to them because it opened new horizons to them and allowed them to make a distinction between religion, morals and the law.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marceau: Mr. Speaker, they din into our ears the principle that life is the most precious thing. I quite agree, and this is why

[Mr. Marceau.]

I am in favour of this bill. I consider, Mr. Speaker, that although I am a Catholic—and by saying so I probably want to avoid every attack that could be made against me about my former intervention because I am a Catholic and I am proud of it—this does not prevent me from considering those who practice another religion as not following the right track. I do not think I can assure that I have a monopoly on truth, but I believe, on the other hand, that if a person is pregnant and believes that her morals and her principles allow her to ask for an abortion, I cannot in all conscience let her die because I am a Catholic and therefore against abortion.

I consider, Mr. Speaker, that it does not belong to me to pass judgment on the intentions of others who do not practice my religion. From the moral point of view, I am not in favour of abortion, but as a legislator in this house, I think that in our pluralist society everybody has the right to follow the principles that he regards as just and I do not think I have the right to prevent him from doing what he wishes. Indeed, I think that the bill under study takes into account the Canadian context in which we also live in the province of Quebec.

• (4:40 p.m.)

I would not say I have consulted everyone of my constituents, for this would not be true, but I am happy to say that I have probed rather deep into the matter and had quite a number of consultations, regardless of the political allegiance of my correspondents.

Of course, as a representative of the riding of Lapointe, it may seem rather strange that I should speak in favour of the government. I understand my friends of the Ralliement créditiste have always been accustomed to hear, in this riding, a voice expressing distrust towards the government in power, but, this does not mean that my predecessor, whom everybody knows, had only shortcomings. On the contrary, I will say this about him that he was sincere and understood in his own way the role of French Canadians in society.

I do not necessarily share his opinions but, I would not go so far as labelling him as some people have. It is the first time I have the opportunity to talk about him and I must say I am always glad whenever I meet him. Even though we do not share the same views this does not prevent us from being what I would call casual friends.