

Abortion

Surely we must agree that abortion should not be used as a method to solve this problem. To use abortion in this way only brutalizes and dehumanizes our society. Whether one views life as a gift of God or as an entity to be cherished with wonder in our universe, Canada's abortion laws are removing this right to life, and it is nothing but a condemnation of each and every one of us.

The purpose of my bill is to insert an amendment in the Criminal Code which would remove these loopholes which permit wholesale murder based on social expediency. My bill would allow a qualified medical doctor in an accredited hospital to abort or procure the miscarriage of any woman in order to prevent her death, not for any socioeconomic reason or for purposes of expediency. On November 11 we were reminded of the holocausts of World War I and World War II, when life in some minds became very cheap. This is not what we would expect from a civilized country. This is something we must change. If we do not advance in this way we cannot be truly civilized.

● (1710)

The other portion of the amendment contained in my bill is the repeal of the provisions in the Criminal Code which permit the establishment of therapeutic abortion committees. The 1969 provision did not, and does not, require the setting up of the therapeutic abortion committees in accredited hospitals, it merely sets down the procedure in the instance that this option is undertaken. Abortion provisions are contained in the Criminal Code and thus are a matter of federal jurisdiction. However, hospitals come under provincial jurisdiction and that is where the administration and control lies.

I would simply say that these committees have not worked, Mr. Speaker. The issue of abortion is a moral one, not a political one. When people run for election to hospital boards, whether they be classed as anti-abortion or pro-abortion, then the matter becomes political. But abortion is a question of civil rights. The unborn child has a right to life; a civil right to life. It is up to the state, to the federal government, to this House of Commons to protect and honour the right of the unborn child.

We have been discussing the constitutional resolution in this House, Mr. Speaker. Will the right to life in that resolution deem that section 251 of the Criminal Code is *ultra vires*? Will it honour the intent of this bill and, if so, will it specifically honour the pregnant woman's right to life if her life has been deemed in medical danger?

As a member of Parliament, I believe I am elected to serve my constituents. This past summer I surveyed my constituents asking their views and seeking their input on the abortion laws in Canada. The majority of the response indicated that abortion should be permitted only to prevent the death of a mother.

Pro-life groups in Canada have often been referred to as the silent majority, Mr. Speaker. I would submit to you that there is no such thing as a silent majority; only governments that are deaf and refuse to hear the cry of the populace. I hope that regardless of political affiliation, hon. members will send this bill to committee for further study. I shall not take all the time

allotted to me, Mr. Speaker, so that we may hear from my hon. friends and colleagues in the other parties. I know that the hon. member for Saskatoon East (Mr. Ogle), the hon. member for London-Middlesex (Mr. Bloomfield) and others would like to express their views and concerns on this matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I rise, as I did one year ago on November 30, to speak on this very important question of abortion and changes to the Criminal Code. I believe the changes suggested to the act would be regressive and discriminatory toward women by preventing them from having the right to choose what is right for them and their families in their particular circumstances.

I should like to make one point very clear at the beginning. The New Democratic Party does not sanction abortion as a method of birth control. Along with the hon. member, we deplore the increasing need for women to seek abortions. In most cases this is caused by the stresses of today's society, increasing poverty, the lack of stable family relations and, often, of stable marital relations; the extreme youth of many mothers—and I shall come to that in a moment—the health problems that are often involved, and economic insecurity.

The New Democratic Party believes that it is much better to prevent an unwanted pregnancy than for a woman to be forced to bear an unwanted child which she cannot care for or which may be neglected or even abused in later years. It is far better to prevent an unwanted pregnancy than to decide to have an abortion. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, abortion is rarely a consideration if a woman and her partners have a stable relationship and the means to care for their child.

I believe it is also far better to prevent an unwanted pregnancy than it is for unwanted children to be born and then given up for continuing changes of foster homes. This is happening frequently today and there is considerable evidence that children may be damaged by constant changes and feelings of abandonment, no matter how caring many foster homes may be.

Prevention, of course, starts with a loving relationship and adequate sex information in the home. Parents who provide relaxed, honest answers about procreation, human relations and sexual development, are preparing their child for mature relationships later in life. Preparation, as we all know, starts with pre-schoolers, the information increasing as the child reaches puberty.

It is also important that schools take a positive attitude toward teaching human growth and development, including positive family life education for both girls and boys. Early training must demonstrate the importance of love and caring, respect for others and for one's self.

Unwanted pregnancies will not be prevented if we do not deal realistically with what is happening with youth today. Despite family standards, the mores and desires of parents who care very much for their children, it is a fact of life that in today's society things have changed completely from the way