

Criminal Code

The other point that is often made is that abortion should not be used as birth control. We know that 20.4 per cent of abortions were repeat abortions in 1985. That figure is far too high. Therefore, I think the thrust of what the Hon. Member is trying to do is a good one—

Ms. Mitchell: What is going to stop that? How do you stop it?

Mr. Reimer: When we get into the debate on the different options—the NDP Member is going on with the Party line and trying to interrupt. I wish Members of the NDP would simply let a person finish his comments. When they speak, I will be quiet.

In conclusion, let me simply say that the thrust of the Hon. Member's motion is a good one. The Government has provided a means of dealing with this issue, and I hope that the other Parties will give us the consent to move quickly so that we may have a real debate that looks at protecting the child, something which we have not been doing, and also looks at protecting the life of the mother if necessary. All these side issues that used to exist in Section 251 must be done away with, and I think that if the Hon. Member were to look at amendment (a), he would see that it comes very close to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McKinnon): I intend to call on the speakers in the following order: the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) followed by the Hon. Member for Hochelaga—Maisonnette (Mr. Desrosiers) followed by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar).

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate today. I believe that I am the only Member who has changed his mind on this issue since the repeal of Section 251 of the Criminal Code earlier this year. At least I think I am the only one who has admitted to doing so.

In speaking in favour of this private Member's Bill this afternoon, I should explain to the House the reasons that provoked me to change my mind on such a fundamental and important issue. I suppose the first reason is the fact that the previous position I had taken was wrong and, naturally, having taken a position that was wrong, I needed to correct it. The reason I am of the opinion and sincere belief that the previous position I had taken was wrong is what I would like to express to the House now.

Since last January, a number of Members of Parliament have been lobbied, and so have I, by people in favour of more restrictive laws, by people in favour of no laws at all and by people in favour of a so-called middle-of-the-road approach. One of the useful things about this lobby is the fact that it has provoked or at least encouraged me to obtain more information. When I say more information, I do not necessarily mean information that was provided to me by the various people who were lobbying. Of course, they too provided useful and

valuable information, but I took it upon myself to obtain more and more of what I felt could be useful information for me.

Sometimes I wondered why I was doing this, because I thought I had made up my mind on the issue already. Nevertheless, I continued to accumulate and read various documents. For me, one of the things that provoked me into changing my mind, above many others, was the fact that I re-read my own speech on capital punishment. I was the first Liberal Member to speak on capital punishment, aside from my Leader (Mr. Turner). I had indicated that life, all life, was worth preserving and that no life should be destroyed for any reason.

I am not saying that everyone who is against abortion should be against capital punishment. I would hope that to be the case, but it is not necessarily so. They are two different issues. For me, however, there was a parallel which was important in my own mind and in my own conscience in assisting me to make up my mind.

It got to a point at which I had difficulty living with myself with the position I had taken. I do not think I changed my position because of intense pressure from my electorate, although of course they too had a lot to say. I think I changed my mind because of that crisis of conscience when I came to realize that I had taken a position which was so much at odds with what I actually believed.

● (1720)

Some of the information I obtained does not necessarily come from pro-life groups. I have here a copy of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, hardly a pro-life propaganda tool, dated November 19, 1987. It contains an article "Pain and Its Effects in the Human Neonate and Fetus". Written by two doctors, it says that the foetus can indeed feel pain as early as seven weeks in the pregnancy. It says:

Cutaneous sensory receptors appear in the perioral area of the human fetus in the 7th week of gestation; they spread to the rest of the face, the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet by the 11th week—

There is sensation in those parts of the body by the 11th week of the pregnancy. If there is such a thing as a feeling of pain at the 7th week on the part of the foetus, if there is a heartbeat as we know there is, if there is all the other development of that foetus which we know there is because of ultrasound and other electronic equipment which provides us with that information, then one has to conclude that there is life, at least at that point.

Does life begin at conception? Several theologians contemplated that issue many years ago. I do not know the answer anymore than anyone else. However, for the purposes of our discussion today, given what we know now medically and otherwise, I have to assume that life does begin at conception. If someone has a differing view, I am willing to listen to it and to the proof that it is otherwise. I do not think I should be proving that life begins at conception but I think the onus rests