

Abortion

husband's home as a result of family breakdown is hardly any better. Instead of engaging in sterile, illogical debates on abortion, we should try to set policies to really encourage people to have children and to correct the shortcomings of our society. If we want to be honest with ourselves and admit it for once, the present policies do not encourage families to have several children. We build dwellings with only one bedroom. It costs less. For a woman with two, three or four children to use public transport today is quite a feat. Has this problem been thought of?

A number of individuals have made the point that falling birth rates and adoption problems were mainly due to abortion.

Nothing could be farther from the truth in my view! We are now living in 1988, and when a woman brings her pregnancy to term, she keeps her child. It is extremely rare that a woman, in spite of her solitude, her emotional, financial and other problems, chooses to give her child away for adoption. That was done in 1938, not 1988!

Decreasing birth rates are this century's burden. It is my hope that nobody in this House nor even outside will think that women are to blame. We are facing a scary increase in violence against women and children, from men albeit distressed and desperate no doubt, but still from men. Are we considering those abused children, those horror stories we read in the papers?

Would those who would legislate against abortion think for a minute, deep down in their conscience, of those serious problems experienced by women, a large proportion of Canadian women in the native, visible minority and other groups? Again, there are a number of factors involved in falling birth rates, and it is my deepest hope today that provinces will join the Canadian Government in asking for a Royal inquiry on all aspects of the future of families into the 21st Century and on measures that will have to be taken now to promote higher birth rates.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this Government when preparing the legislation that of necessity will follow the vote on the motion now before us, will reflect the wisdom of Members in this House who reflect the views of their constituents. I have the deep conviction that a very strong consensus will emerge in favour of a middle ground.

Moreover, I urge government Ministers to consider right now, not tomorrow, as a preventive measure, a campaign of information and popular education, and I stress popular, Mr. Speaker, among young people and the general population, and that as a minimum, increased help and financial support will encourage mothers to complete their pregnancy.

Mr. Speaker, when we go back to our constituencies and meet young women who have to care for a young child on a welfare cheque that is hardly one sixteenth of the weekly pay of a Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, how can we claim that such a woman can decently live, while sharing the joy of

life, bringing up a child under conditions that will necessarily lead to that child growing under conditions that are totally conducive to his or her personal growth?

Mr. Speaker, only then shall we solve for the major part that delicate question of abortion in the interests of Canadians.

• (1830)

Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to take part in the consideration of the important issue now before the House.

Like my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to object to the Government's past and present handling of this important matter.

Abortion is obviously a very current subject much discussed every day in every way, mostly in the media. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) recently said that he did not want an election as long as the House had not settled this important matter, lest the next election become the ideal forum for both schools of thought on this major issue.

I think that statement brings out the significance of the problem. Despite the scope of the discussion and the depth of the issue under review, the Government merely put forward a kind of compromise motion which does not satisfy either side and represents, from what the Government's spokesman is saying, an attempt to take a sense of the House.

In the circumstances, I deplore that systematic refusal to settle or approach the issue head-on so that the Canadian people know once and for all where the Government stands.

As I emphasized before, this is a very important matter. I have been a Member of this House for over nine years and, Mr. Speaker, despite the big problems and major issues that surfaced in those nine years, no other question has given rise to so many responses, meetings, papers and letters in my constituency. I have certainly received several thousand very moving pleas from persons—women in most cases—who, for the first time in their lives, have gone to the trouble of writing to their Member of Parliament to state their preoccupations and their apprehensions concerning this very important issue.

In the course of all these exchanges and experiences it is obvious that I have had to express my views and attitudes on the matter. I do not think that it is possible for any Canadian man or woman to have no opinion on this issue, particularly in view of the fact that those on both sides of the issue have provided so much information and lobbied so powerfully. I therefore believe that in some way or another just about all Canadian men and women have committed themselves one way or the other.

It is an important choice in a person's life, a choice based, to some extent, on personal experience.

As a lawyer, I have had the opportunity over the years to get acquainted with the regulations and the legislation on abortion. As a politician, I have also seen alarming statistics on the