

Abortion

would take to prove this before a medical board? Who is going to determine whether a woman was raped? Who will be able to say, in front of whom, in front of which doctor, that it was a case of incest? I think it is too easy to say this.

We can satisfy our conscience. We can act very pro-life, if we happen to hold that position, but between the moment the problem is brought before a physician and the moment there is enough evidence to prove it was incest or rape, the child will already be born. I say we must be realistic. Of course we have an easy time of it. Earlier, I heard another Member say: A woman who doesn't want to be pregnant should realize this before. Before having sexual intercourse, I suppose. But what about the man's responsibility? Why put the entire onus on the woman, who is trapped, while we men can just go home and forget about it! I think it is unfair to look at the problem from that perspective, from the perspective of male morality alone. And what is our morality? To let others, to let women cope with a situation that men have created?

I say that when organizing this social order, we must take into account the position of the woman in this situation, and her desires and rights, but we must also define those rights in relation to the rights of others. I believe that the foetus has a right to life. But at what moment does the foetus exist? After the fourth week or the fifth week? I think we need legal and medical opinions. And then perhaps the rights of the foetus will have to take precedence over the rights of the woman, but there is also the right of the biological father. And there is also, according to the Supreme Court's judgment, the right of the woman to control her own body. I believe that if we want to organize this social order, we cannot do so solely on the basis of one set of values. We live in a society that is extremely pluralistic in its religious beliefs and its attitudes to life.

● (2150)

We have people from different countries. We are evolving into a pluralistic society that is much more permissive than before. Some of my colleagues have quoted the Bible and Scripture. Even if we quoted legal texts from 50 or 60 years ago, there was then a set of values to which 90 per cent of the population subscribed. Today this is no longer possible, and much as I feel at ease in a church and I agree with the bishops who set Catholic morality as a goal, Orthodox Jews set their morality as a goal and other religions set their morality as a goal. But there is a difference between proposing something as a value, which I support, and trying to impose it on those who do not have the same values. Since we live in a pluralist society with different opinions, I think that we have to take account of all these factors in organizing the social order.

That is why, just as I am opposed to free, unrestricted abortion, I believe that the State has the responsibility to consider the various opinions in society and to set a legal framework, not in a vague, imprecise motion like the one the Conservative Government presented, but in a series of precise clauses that would to some extent limit a woman's right, as described by the Supreme Court of Canada, to dispose of her

own body and determine when this right takes second place to the right of the unborn child. This must all be put in a legal context. I think that if the motion were more precise, we could perhaps draw some conclusions and positions for the Government, but as it is written, this is impossible. I believe that we must find a solution that certainly at the beginning of a pregnancy allows a woman to exercise some judgement on the future of the foetus she is carrying and to make her own decisions. I find it a pity that such a question must be decided by a majority of men. I would like there to be many more women in this House to help us make that decision. I am not ready to blame women who, in their conscience and because of the environment in which they live, decide to have an abortion.

In this House, we have all seen examples of families in our neighbourhood where such things have happened. I find it easy to make very impassioned speeches, but who is ready to jail a woman for deciding to have an abortion at the beginning of her pregnancy? I am not prepared to do that and that is why I ask those on the extremes, either pro-life or pro-choice, to be a little more reasonable in their approach and to distinguish between one's own deeply held beliefs and the organization of our society. Personally, as a legislator, my choice is to let women at the beginning of a pregnancy be free to choose, but I also say that the State has a responsibility to set limits for this freedom and that we must be presented not with a vague motion that goes nowhere but with a legal text, a Bill, that would enable not only Members of this House but all Canadians, men and women, to judge the value of the proposals contained in it, not just a vague motion of principle like the one in the resolution we have before us.

Mr. Ricardo Lopez (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to rise today on the motion before us which deals with a very controversial and stirring issue. Of course, a matter as important as this one deserves much consideration and must be dealt with not emotionally but with wisdom and most of all with a cool head.

I cannot agree with the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) who, earlier, criticized the Government for having brought forward too vague a motion that will not necessarily become law if it is adopted.

Considering the complex and controversial nature of the issue, we will have to take as much time as we need to understand it fully and to have consultations, seek legal advice and other views likely to enlighten us to arrive at a more appropriate conclusion. To pass a motion or legislation hastily would seem to me a shunning of responsibilities, particularly on a matter of such enormous, vital importance.

Mr. Speaker, of course, I too am against abortion. I am sure that all Canadian men and women are against abortion. But we must not close our eyes, because there are times in life when decisions must be taken, and it is never easy especially on an issue as crucial as this one.