

Government Orders

to ensure that we do have equal access across not only our province but across the country.

This legislation, Bill C-43, is a set-back for the women of Canada. The government is suggesting to us that the bill is a compromise, that somehow government members have found a way to weave their way through the courts. I would suggest quite the opposite is going to happen. Perhaps there is some sinister scenario from the Prime Minister's office to introduce this legislation, in the hope that it will fail so then he can say that he attempted to deal with it but, of course, he will attempt to blame Parliament for not being able to pass this legislation.

When we do vote on this legislation at second reading we will see what support there is, if any, from the government members to ensure that this legislation is not passed because the bill is not going to help solve any of the problems we have with health care and with the unwanted pregnancies in Canada.

I want to just wrap up on what I think is a related issue. Our leader has recently been speaking about the incidence of child poverty in this country. I believe it is on the agenda to be debated tomorrow in this House. I think that is part of the package that we must look at and decide what we want to do. We must take a holistic approach to health care. This legislation is not that. We are not getting that from this government and we have many steps to go yet before we can see the kind of open and fair access to health services, including abortion, across this country that we need.

• (2040)

I know that this is not going to be the end of this debate in the House or throughout this country. We will be debating this for some time to come. That is our duty. That is why we have been elected.

I think all of us are taking this discussion and debate very seriously and we will certainly when we are back home in our ridings be explaining our position. That is our obligation. It is my obligation, I believe, given my own position and our party's position, to oppose this legislation.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, through you, I take this opportunity to address Canadians and my northern constituents of the Western Arctic. I speak to this issue after much deliberation,

soul-searching and examination of the implications of Bill C-43.

I have been listening to the tortured reasoning and qualifications of many on why to support or vote against this bill. I am not a doctor or a lawyer. Those are not my orientations and I suppose in a sense that would be reason enough in many minds to disqualify much of what I would render as my position, but I say not.

This is not just a legal issue. It is indeed the most profound moral dilemma with which I have ever had to come to terms. This is not just a legal or a medical issue or strictly a woman's issue. This is a human issue with which we are all struggling.

How do I, as a woman of the eighties and nineties, young, and I guess by some standards, progressive, upwardly mobile and career oriented, approach this issue? I know that my first commitment to society as a person is truth and decency. I cannot be hypocritical to save face or to advance my personal political goals and aspirations. That in my mind would be deceitful. I have indeed struggled to find common ground and I have retreated to a place of truth for myself, who I am and what are the values and principles that guide me that I brought to this complex political process.

I am a woman, a mother of three wonderful people, a Dene from the Dene nation in the Northwest Territories, a member for the Western Arctic and, of course, a Canadian federal parliamentarian. All these roles bear each a certain responsibility, sometimes conflicting.

I would be dishonest to say that I could expound a profound legal sense of this issue but my greatest expertise in all these roles is not just being a woman or just being a Member of Parliament, but for 38 years of my life I have been, I was born a Dene and I will always be a Dene. I know in my mind and heart and for the sake of common decency what that means. I do not have to read or research that subject. I know what the issue of life means to those people, the Dene, my people. This is not to say that I do not want to represent or try not to represent the best that I can all the other people in my riding.

On this issue, this is a subject that I know well within the context of my own culture and my own people. It has been a profound guide in all of my struggles, joys, failures, successes and hardships. Rather than to speak of things I know not well, I will speak of how my views are certainly a reflection of the utmost importance given