

*Criminal Code*

I do not propose to deal at this time in any detail with the controversial clauses of the bill. The time to do that is in committee, and I will have more to say there. In my opinion, however, to assume that simply because a person happens to be an adherent of one or another religious belief he is automatically for or against certain of the controversial clauses of this bill is not correct. One must not think of this problem in the terms of Roman Catholics against all others. For example, opposition to abortion is by no means the exclusive preserve of Roman Catholics. The fact is that a growing number of Protestants and Jews are today opposing the widening of the grounds for abortion. For example, just last week the congregation of Metropolitan United in Edmonton passed a resolution urging the government to split the bill. They asked that the government do the very same thing we are asking them to do today—split the bill.

I also suggest that no religious group in this country is trying to force its ideas down the throats of the Canadian people. Those who oppose abortion oppose it because they are convinced that foetal life is human life and that to destroy human life at any stage is deliberate, premeditated, cold-blooded murder. That is the reason we who are opposed to abortion stand opposed. The fact that foetal life is human life and that life begins at conception is not exclusively a theological opinion, although there are some theologians who hold that view. It is also a hard, cold scientific fact which has not yet been successfully disproved. It is acknowledged and concurred in by a publication issued by the government of Canada entitled "The Canadian Mother and Child". I read in that government publication not long ago that when a sperm unites with an ovum a new cell is formed and a new life has begun. This statement is also confirmed by the chairman of the department of biology at the University of San Francisco, Dr. Edward L. Kessel, who has said:

The scientific evidence shows conclusively that life begins at conception.

The Minister of Justice himself admits that some of the provisions pertain to life itself.

Having satisfied myself about that basic fact, my conscience will not allow me to support any amendment to the law which will make it easier than it now is to take the life of a potential human being. If the life of a mother is in danger, yes, but beyond that I suggest we must not go.

Let me remind hon. members that just as sure as we are sitting here this afternoon the proposed widening of the abortion law if it is allowed, will only be the first step toward the next move of abortion by consent. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre indicated this afternoon that he would like to see all provisions with reference to abortion removed from the code. This is just another way of saying that there should be abortion by consent. I think that is wrong, and I refuse to prostitute my moral convictions to the cause of any political party. That is the reason I say we should have a free vote on this bill, and the government should have allowed it. I also believe the bill should have been divided.

In any case, my main point is that those of us who feel this way in conscience should not be forced to vote against those amendments which we know to be good and believe should be made the law of the country. For example, I go along entirely with the provisions of the bill which deal with the tightening of the law in so far as drunken driving is concerned. We have to stop the slaughter on our highways. If the amendment proposed by the Minister of Justice will have that effect, I want to go along with it. I am in complete agreement with the proposal that there should be tightening of the law regarding guns; I go along with that completely. I am in complete agreement with the suggested amendment whereby witnesses cannot be held indefinitely in jail pending the trial at which they are going to give evidence. These are things that I would like to vote for, but I am not allowed to vote for them because my conscience will not allow me to vote for one or two clauses which I feel to be bad.

I submit that for these reasons the bill should be split. Hon. members who sit on the treasury benches say that the bill will not be split. Yet there is still a hope—at least I hope there is—that the private members who sit on the other side of the house will be able to convince their party, the Minister of Justice, the Prime Minister and his cabinet that this bill should be presented to us in a divided form rather than in its present omnibus form so that I and many more like me who want to vote for many of the provisions which we know to be good can vote for them and at the same time vote against those which we are convinced are bad.