

*Criminal Code*

Mr. Speaker, these findings are very important, because the legislation itself on abortion already constitutes an evil, and the acceptance of such an indefinite clause, that changes almost nothing, such as the amendment under consideration,—that could be qualified as unfinished—constitutes a challenge to the interpretation of the terms of the law.

Such women who would ask for an abortion will thus be free to resort to all tactics, but they would be unaware of the actual psychological consequences which will result.

By trying to get out of an unpleasant situation for themselves, by playing upon words, they will get involved, that is, they would not know, and neither the psychiatrist nor the specialists would know exactly where they stand. Well-known doctors came to that conclusion, and one of them, Dr. Walsh, when he appeared before the committee on justice and legal affairs on March 20 last, added:

It may impose tremendous strains on her health, it may impose tremendous economic and other strains, and in the case of the unmarried mother, which we must always keep in mind, it imposes the tremendous problem of giving up her baby.

One of the problems that is not properly investigated yet is the following. In respect of a woman who has an abortion...our experience is that a woman can tolerate giving up her baby much better than feeling that she has deprived it of its right to life.

This is something that is very deep in a woman's makeup. It is psycho-biological. We cannot prove it to anyone statistically. It is an intuitive observation. It is something that doctors who work with patients find all the time.

I think that for all those reasons we must be extremely careful before accepting all the amendments, especially the one now before us.

Some hon. members believe that the new legislation on abortion will only legalize abortion for serious reasons, for instance to preserve the life of the mother, even if it is seldom necessary.

It is generally recognized that abortion for such reasons is already legal. The changes proposed in the bill, on the whole, open the door a little more. That is why I submit that this amendment does not restrict enough the scope of the bill nor the meaning of its wording.

Bill C-150 proposes to legalize abortion to protect the mother's health. The decision here is left to the sole discretion of a small abortion committee.

In fact, this legislation will allow two doctors, a majority in a three-member committee,

to authorize abortions for the purposes they decide upon.

In a television program on the CTV network on December 27 last, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) confirmed our apprehension concerning abortion committees. Let the abortion committees make the law, he said. He stated that the word "health" would not be interpreted by the courts of justice but by each therapeutic abortion committee. In other words, the decision of such committees is above and beyond the law.

We have noticed that in our hospitals abortions are now made for reasons of life or death, and not on psychological grounds. The immediate, rather than the future, physical health is more important. There is no gambling, no shillyshallying and consequently doctors are not blamed for such operations. If there is an emergency, an operation is performed but only with the mother's consent. Such cases are extremely rare, and are becoming more so, because of progress in the medical field, but when they happened, the mother more often than not chose to sacrifice herself in order to give birth to her child.

Why then should the government pester us with "probably" and "maybe" or with amendments like this one, which is incomplete and does not change much? What is taking place now is simple and gives rise to abuses. Why do this on purpose?

I believe first of all that a bill such as this one should never have been introduced. Now that the harm has been done, we, in the Ralliement Cr ditiste, are trying to limit the disastrous consequences by trying to induce the government to adopt a firm and clear-cut attitude, which will not let the moral health of pregnant women be adversely affected by an abortion.

Moral health is very difficult to define; even doctors have no definite views on this and find it difficult to explain this moral health, which cannot be endangered by a pregnancy, which is a normal process for women. Several physicians who appeared before medical boards have found it quite difficult to explain and establish the nature of moral health for a pregnant woman.

I hope that my intervention on this amendment will be more successful than those of the previous speakers, but as I do not expect any comprehension from the hon. members opposite, I ask them for once, since that amendment seems to be rather reasonable, to vote in favour of it and show for once at least that the bill can be improved.