

Right to Life

Madam Speaker, it is also of the utmost importance to allow Canadians to express their views on whether protection of the foetus should be guaranteed by the Constitution. Our Government sees it as its duty to consult before making such a fundamental change in our legislation. Indeed, what could be more fundamental than an amendment to the Constitution?

We have always consulted Canadians about social benefits and issues involving equality. We cannot amend our laws on abortion and entrench the rights of foetuses in the Constitution without consulting the various groups concerned.

This matter is too important for us not to try to achieve the highest degree of consensus.

I do not believe that we can resolve such a complex issue in so short a debate. Before bringing in laws on abortion, we must ensure that we know all their implications, and most important, that we have the support of the greatest number of people, otherwise, we might be creating more problems than we would solve.

Again, Madam Speaker, I repeat that a five-hour debate would not be sufficient for a thorough and complete review of all the consequences of constitutionally guaranteeing the rights of the foetus. Consultation with the provinces on the possible impact of such an amendment is imperative.

I urge the Hon. Members of this House in favour of enshrining the rights of the foetus to realize that amending the Constitution is no simple matter. We would first have to examine thoroughly the consequences such a step might have, and consultation, in particular, would have to be extensive. Finally, Madam Speaker, may I say that the debate on abortion has already been a very divisive factor among Canadian men and women that I feel it would be much too dangerous to proceed with the very significant amendment proposed by my hon. colleague.

[English]

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on an issue which is important to all Members of this House and all Canadians. Basically I see this as another back-bench Conservative attempt to make it more difficult for Canadian women to obtain safe, legal abortions. At the same time the motion, if it were adopted, would distort the whole concept of human rights in Canada. It calls on the Government to extend to the human foetus the basic legal rights we have under Section 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The implications are staggering. It moves the entire debate about abortion away from the medical sphere where it properly belongs, and into the legal sphere.

We can all accept that abortion has some very important moral elements which both individuals and society have to deal with. However, the medical questions are most properly addressed by the woman and her doctor. The moral questions must be addressed by the woman and her own conscience, perhaps with the help of a priest or some other counsellor. We have to recognize the need for more counselling facilities for

women in this situation. I therefore particularly urge upon the Government and government Members the necessity for more funding for women's centres so they can receive the kind of counselling they need to reach their own decisions.

I am concerned that if this motion is adopted the procedure I have just outlined will be completely derailed by a very complex legal process. We all know the difficulty women face under the present legislation. Hospitals lack the required therapeutic abortion committees in order to approve abortions being performed in those hospitals. This is particularly the case in rural areas. Women in rural areas often have to travel long distances to major centres to get safe and legal abortions. At present the Provinces of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland have no hospitals with therapeutic abortion committees.

• (1630)

I suggest, Madam Speaker, that the answers to our concerns about abortion do not lie in banning abortion, but rather in safer methods of birth control and proper education. The Member who sponsored the motion says he is not opposed to birth control. I am pleased to hear that. However, we must recognize that safe and effective methods of birth control do not exist in our society. They still need to be found. We know the health problems which women are having due to the pill, the IUD, the Dalkon shield and now with Depo Provera. Yet, research funding for safe contraceptive methods has been cut in Canada and the United States.

A study was done for *International Family Planning Perspectives*, a publication in New York. The authors asked 62 pharmaceutical manufacturers whether they were doing research and development on birth control. Of the 42 American companies which responded, 33 said they had abandoned such projects. This is the model of research which was held up this afternoon by government speakers saying we need more research in various areas. However, in this area in which we desperately need research, the pharmaceutical companies are cutting back. This is obviously an area in which the Government should be getting involved. Instead, it is cutting back in this field.

In a July 22, 1985, news release of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada, Nancy Sunderland, the Treasurer, pointed out that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) has "contradicted himself by not treating all organizations funded under the family planning program in the same manner". While cutting the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada by 12.5 per cent and the Canadian Committee on Fertility Research by 75 per cent, Serena, an organization that promotes natural family planning methods, received a 12 per cent increase in its funding.

The need for research into adequate contraceptive methods is being completely ignored by the Government. In addition to adequate contraceptive methods, there is a need for education. Education does work. Planned Parenthood of Ontario has pointed out that there has been a decline in the adolescent