

*Government Orders*

Mr. Speaker, I have just explained my philosophy, which reflects the tenets of the Christian conscience and my social conscience, which dictate my behaviour.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the issue of abortion and also to speak to Bill C-43.

Let me just say at the outset that I consider abortion one of the most important and difficult issues that we have ever had to face as a legislature. It is also one of the most difficult issues that any individual has to face. We are debating an issue which strikes at the core of our belief system. Every individual who enters the abortion debate brings with him or her a different conception of the meaning of the purpose of life, of our collective existence, and of our society. I for one believe that life begins at conception. All of my religious and rural upbringing has given me a strong respect for the preciousness of life.

Abortion demands and produces more than opinion. It demands and produces belief, and beliefs are what people live for and what some people quite frankly are willing to die for.

I know that all of us in this House understand the depth of the sentiment involved in this debate and of the disagreement within this House and in communities throughout Canada. We see it when we go to our constituencies and talk to Canadians. I have received letters from hundreds of residents throughout Haldimand—Norfolk, each one of them with strong views and each one vastly different from the next.

All those views are represented in this House tonight. The predominant viewpoint and opinion expressed by the people of Haldimand—Norfolk to me is one that leans toward a pro-life meaning.

• (1950)

I have met people from Dunnville. In fact, in my constituency office last Friday I was to meet a small group of people concerned about this issue. Well over 100 people packed into my office. We had a good discussion about the bill because they are concerned about it.

They are concerned about what some people in this House like to call a compromise solution, and they did not believe there was a compromise. It was their point of view that this bill should be defeated. I explained to them my belief that if the bill were defeated after third reading, we would not have another opportunity in this House to debate the issue. I still believe that. I believe

that this government is not committed to bringing forth another piece of legislation if this bill is defeated.

I am left with the question as to whether or not this bill goes far enough toward a compromise or whether or not this bill could be amended at report stage in such a way that a compromise solution could be found that would be acceptable to all in this House.

I believe that if I project my views and the amendments proposed by certain members of this House, we are going to get extremes again. I have been talking to different members throughout this House and have looked at the amendments they want to bring in. Quite frankly they are still at the extremes. I believe that if a bill is going to come out of this, we are going to have to compromise. That would mean that I would have to compromise my beliefs and that many members of this House will have to compromise theirs too.

But I feel that it is important to have a piece of legislation on the books because some law is better than no law. I believe that if we defeat this motion at second reading we will have no law and that the rights of the foetus will not be protected.

What we are talking about tonight is what is right and what is wrong, and who decides this issue? I believe that we as a legislature must decide. Our decision must be based on the full exercise of our collective mental and spiritual capabilities.

I do not believe that it is preferable for Parliament to stay out of the abortion debate. In fact, I do not believe it is possible to stay out of the abortion debate. We are dealing with the fundamental rights of human beings. If we do not decide, we are saying that we believe that somebody else should. With the depth of belief on abortion and the depth of opposition on abortion, I do not believe that anyone else can decide but the highest court in the land—Parliament.

To abdicate our responsibility to legislate on abortion would have just as much impact on the lives of Canadians as accepting and fulfilling our capacity to legislate. We need to find a solution that is workable, and by that I mean one that the majority of us here in this House with our strongly held beliefs can support. Unfortunately, I believe that the bill we have before us in its present form fails in its attempt to provide a workable solution.

I have heard many of my colleagues in this House observe that in a perfect world we would not have to legislate on abortion. In a perfect world every pregnancy would be a wanted pregnancy. A world of only wanted pregnancies could come about in two ways as I see it. Birth control, if accessible and safe enough for all women and men, would allow for absolute control over