

Criminal Code

In fact, the only sections of the Criminal Code that affected them were the gun provisions. I told them that these had been modified so no one would be adversely affected. My son will still be able to have his 32 rifles and 10 revolvers. I pointed out that the provisions were not going to hurt the rod and gun clubs, so no one was very much concerned.

However, Mr. Speaker, I think we should be concerned, particularly about the press of this country which has given a totally wrong impression of the meaning of the abortion provisions of the bill to the Canadian people. We are facing a very important social problem in this country. I believe the minister will admit that therapeutic abortions are not going to change anything. True, the doctor will now have some protection. Previously, even though he carried out a therapeutic abortion in a hospital and had ten people supporting his decision that it was necessary, in effect he was still performing an illegal abortion. Now, the proper machinery is established, abortions can be performed legally within the narrow confines of the law.

Hundreds of thousands of abortions are being performed illegally in this country, to the extent that the situation has now reached major proportions. In this regard, members of parliament should forget some of their parochial reasoning and decide what is for the public good.

● (9:40 p.m.)

The attitude of some hon. members reminds me of something I saw when I visited a southern Ontario township in which they were having a plebiscite. In this area there were hotels and many people did quite a bit of drinking. They did not drink legally, however, by having their drinks in the hotels. I saw a minister preaching to those people from the back of some truck. He was telling them how terrible it would be if they voted to have beer in Hanover. And who paid for the truck, Mr. Speaker? The bootlegger did, and everyone knew it. And who paid for the band? Why, the bootlegger did, and everyone knew it. You could go into almost every private house in the area and have a drink with the inhabitants; but you could not have two drinks because the people did not want their neighbours to know they were drinking. I cite this example to show how hypocritical everyone there was. Similarly, members of parliament and members of the press are equally hypocritical and stupid if they maintain that in this country

there are two schools of thought on abortion; that one faction wants it and the other faction does not. That really is quite inaccurate, because when we talk of abortion we are talking of something that affects society.

Should there ever be one or two serious accidents in the abortion mills in this country as a result of which women die, we shall see a great hue and cry for changes to be made in the legislation so that women may have some protection. No matter why a woman wants an abortion, she thinks she has a good reason. She may be emotionally upset, or physically concerned; if she seeks an abortion she should have the protection of the law. The matter is of social concern.

Many hon. members here have talked about conscience. Very recently I listened to members in my household discussing the Pope's decision to change the list of saints. One of my sons is married to a Roman Catholic girl, and my other son shortly will marry a Roman Catholic. These are mixed marriages. I raised a family of nephews who were strong Roman Catholics; I tell hon. members this to show them that the discussion was serious and interesting. The members of my household were joking about the saints. They said you might get rid of St. Christopher, but you might have trouble in England getting rid of St. George, even though they got rid of dragons over there. They were most concerned about St. Nicholas, though. I think that even if our ecclesiastics dropped St. Nicholas from the calendar of saints the Protestants, and especially the shopkeepers, would make sure he would be revered at Christmas for a long time to come.

An hon. Member: But your party believes in Santa Claus.

Mr. Peters: If the Pope had decided to authorize birth control, no one would have argued with him. It is surprising that the consciences of many hon. members are not troubled by this decision; I say this because I have no doubt that some members of parliament of a Roman Catholic persuasion are practising birth control. Therefore, they accept the concept of birth control. Many of the laws of this country are, so to speak, ecclesiastically oriented. In many cases the ecclesiastical underpinning has disappeared, but the law remains. As ecumenical councils meet and consider many social problems, we shall consider many of our social problems in a changed light.