

Criminal Code

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. May I inform the hon. member for Lotbinière that his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I still have two minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the house to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should also like to thank the house for its co-operation.

At the stage we have reached now I think that information should be supplied by newspapers, radio or other mass media. Today we live in a modern country where means of communication are extremely quick, efficient and reliable. Before passing of this bill we could easily consult a large part of the people, make some sort of sampling across Canada in order to know better and with greater certainty the opinion of the Canadian people with regard to this bill so as to make sure, if we are indeed responsible legislators, that this is a truly human legislation consistent with the needs of the Canadian people.

Mr. Speaker, once more I should like to thank the house for its kind co-operation and I should like to ask the Liberal members who object to this bill not to be afraid to stand up since it does seem that the Canadian people back up all those who object to this bill, and in 1969 a Prime Minister cannot impose his views because the opposition is fairly watchful.

I regret, Mr. Speaker, that there are not enough government members who rise and make their views known. I think that would be important. We should like to know what they think of this. We do not know yet whether they are under the thumb of a dictator.

[*English*]

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take only two or three minutes of the time of the house. By so doing I am not indicating my opinion of the importance of the bill because obviously the bill is of the greatest importance and is in the public interest, but it has had a full

discussion. I rise at this time not to prolong the discussion but to indicate my own position at this stage of the proceedings. I have always taken the position of being in favour of a free vote on this measure.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: When the matter was first brought before the house I took this position because some clauses of the bill involve a question of conscience for a good many Canadians and a good many members of the house. Putting all these clauses together in the form of an omnibus bill has had the effect of placing a good many members in the difficult position that they may have to vote against the whole bill because they cannot in conscience accept part of it. I have therefore favoured splitting the bill along the lines indicated by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams).

More recently we have favoured a report from the committee in four separate sections which would have somewhat the same effect. We have advocated this for the same reason, that it would thereby remove a good many members of the house from the unfortunate position in which they have been placed by the omnibus nature of the bill. So the members of this party will be voting according to their own consciences.

While I have stated my objection to the omnibus nature of the bill and my disappointment that the government has refused to split it, nevertheless I will be voting for second reading of the bill and for its reference to the committee. Although I have some reservations about some aspects of the bill, I believe that on the whole it is constructive and that it certainly contains a number of measures which I favour sufficiently strongly to overcome whatever objections or reservations I have to some parts of the bill. Therefore I believe it should go to the committee.

As to some of the controversial sections of the bill relating to abortion and homosexuality, I doubt that in practice they really constitute much of a reform or will result in much change in so far as their enforcement is concerned by those responsible for enforcing the criminal law. With regard to the abortion provisions, I am not sure that their main effect will not make it more difficult in fact to obtain abortions in some of the more remote parts of the country, and I have some doubt whether the proposed amendment can be made to work equally across the country. I think this point of view has already been