

Adjournment Debate

pressures to do the same for organizations holding contrary views. In fact, the department has not hesitated to fund organizations which both officially endorse and actively work toward the withdrawal of all legal restrictions on abortion.

For example, the Family Planning Federation of Canada, which recently received a grant of \$500,000, takes the official position, and publicizes it, that abortion should be removed from the Criminal Code and that all hospitals be forced to provide abortion on request as a condition of receiving public funds. Part of the \$500,000 was distributed to the local affiliates of the federation, many of them called Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood of Toronto has stated that this grant is being used to distribute to students literature which says, in part: "We think having an abortion is more moral than bringing an unwanted child into this world".

● (2220)

Planned Parenthood of Toronto stages seminars for 13 to 19-year olds at which the pro-abortion position is clearly advanced. I have in my hand a comic book distributed widely by Planned Parenthood which says:

Some people consider abortion immoral and they have a right to think this way. Most people, as well as the majority of religious groups, believe that women should have the right to make their own decisions about their unintended pregnancies—whether to give birth (keep the child or put it up for adoption) or have an abortion. Where abortion is illegal only the rich can arrange for a safe one.

Planned Parenthood of Guelph summarizes the result of its abortion counselling service in which for the first six months of 1973, of 29 pregnant women counselled, 25 had therapeutic abortions. Further, the department itself is distributing pamphlets, printed in the United States, containing pro-abortion messages.

It is ridiculous to state that this government is not aiding the pro-abortion movement. It is not only hypocritical; it is a national scandal that the government refuses at the same time to give concrete assistance to the pro-life movement in the face of alarming escalation of abortions in Canada.

Canada has the opportunity to lead the world in showing that non-violent solutions may be found for the ills of our society, and this government has a unique opportunity of being in the forefront of this leadership by promoting respect for all human beings, born and yet unborn.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and for the facts he put on record. I have had an opportunity to meet with members of Alliance for Life during the past few months and I have always been impressed by the devotion and the quality of work being

accomplished by this organization. As to their particular request for funds, the matter is still under consideration.

In his speech the hon. member made certain statements that I should like to check, particularly regarding the official position of the Family Planning Federation of Canada. I must confess that this is the first time, to my knowledge, that an official position has been attributed to the Family Planning Federation of Canada and I shall certainly investigate this matter further.

As to the activities of various affiliates, obviously one could always answer, on the other side, that there are other affiliates of the Family Planning Federation of Canada which are opposed to abortion in any way, shape or form. I suspect that within the Family Planning Federation of Canada one would find a wide variety of opinion, so in a way I do not think it would be quite fair to take just one side or one group within the Family Planning Federation and represent it as the view of the federation.

As to the particular document that has been printed in the United States and allegedly distributed by my department, it was brought to my attention a couple of months ago and I immediately gave instructions that such distribution be stopped. I understand there is really very little circulation. It was a kind of compendium of brochures and publications available in the field and distributed through the department. No one had ever noticed this reference to that particular book, as far as I know.

In terms of general policy, the federal government does not regard abortion as an acceptable method of birth control; I should like that point to be made very clear. It does, however, recognize that unwanted conceptions may occur as a result of failure to use an effective method of contraception or any contraception at all. In these cases there may be justification for therapeutic abortion, not because the pregnancy was unplanned but because it may have given rise to conditions which, in the opinion of a therapeutic abortion committee, provide appropriate grounds for termination in accordance with the Criminal Code.

Birth control clinics are often visited by women seeking advice about unwanted pregnancies. To turn them away without help would be inhumane and could be regarded as tantamount to an attempt by the clinic's staff to impose their personal views about a subject on which society has expressed its collective will through the law.

It would seem that much of the difficulty in understanding the federal government's position arises from a misunderstanding of the nature of abortion counselling. In the sense in which it is customarily employed and in which it is defined by this department, it involves the objective presentation of several alternatives within the laws of Canada as defined by parliament, and not the deliberate application of pressure to consider one option only.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.