

*Government Orders*

I believe that we are all here for a purpose, and that is to create a better Canada, a better nation. As candidates many of us took positions on abortion to get us to this House, in a sense, so that people knew what we were all about before we were elected. I think that we must honour our own positions on an issue like abortion.

I am often reminded of my own words in this regard. I normally do not quote myself but in this particular case I will. My statement on abortion is as simple as this:

I am opposed to abortion except in cases where the life of the mother is clearly endangered—further I will support all legislation that protects the life of the unborn child.

I will not deviate from that position. I am comfortable with that position.

• (2120 )

I think we have to remind Canadians of what exactly is in Bill C-43 which we are debating here this evening. I am going to read part of that bill to remind Canadians of the exact wording of it. It reads in part:

Every person who induces an abortion on a female person is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, unless the abortion is induced by or under the direction of a medical practitioner who is of the opinion that, if the abortion were not induced, the health or life of the female person would be likely to be threatened.

I am not entirely comfortable with the words “likely to be threatened”, because I think the lack of a clear definition leaves the door open in this particular case. I refer back to my own words in 1988 “except in cases where the life of the mother is clearly endangered”. I believe that we are living in a compassionate society which has to look after those who are not fortunate enough to look after themselves.

I would like to quote a very famous American politician who is no longer with us. Hubert Humphrey is an individual who many Canadians came to know, and he had this to say about society and civilization:

The true test of civilization is how society treats those in the dawn of life, the margins of life, the twilight of life.

That is very true. A civilized society can be judged on how it treats its most defenceless members. I believe that the foetus is exactly that, a defenceless member of our society.

I am going to go through a crash course in foetology, the study of the unborn child or foetus. This has become one of the fastest growing and most promising fields in medicine.

New techniques and sophisticated instruments have given us a new view into the previously hidden world of the unborn child. We can watch the child developing, moving, touching and responding. When ill, in some cases the the unborn child has been diagnosed, treated and cured within the womb.

I will point out some of the highlights of progression toward human life from conception. When the sperm and ovum unite in fertilization genetic make-up is complete and a unique individual comes into existence.

At 18 days the heartbeat can be detected. At 30 days foundations of brain, spinal cord, nerves and sense organs are complete. The new human being has eyes, ears, a mouth, kidneys, a liver and blood circulation although the mother may not yet know that she is pregnant. At 43 days brain waves can be detected.

At six weeks nerves and muscles begin working together, the skeleton is fully formed but made of cartilage, lips become sensitive to touch. At seven weeks all internal organs are present, the stomach produces digestive juices, the liver manufactures red blood cells, the kidneys eliminate uric acid from the blood, and legs, ankles and toes are formed. At the end of eight weeks lines of the hands develop and will remain a distinctive feature of the individual throughout life. At eight and a half weeks the child squints and the fingers close into a fist if the palm is touched. At ten weeks the thyroid and adrenal glands function. At twelve weeks the child kicks, turns his feet and curls and fans his toes, swallows and drinks fluid, inhales and exhales and sucks his thumb. At 16 to 20 weeks hair grows on the head, eyebrows and eyelashes appear, the child sleeps and wakes and he can be aroused from sleep by external noises. As the basic structure of the human being has been in place for some time, all the unborn child now needs is time to grow.

I think we have to allow that foetus to grow and we as parliamentarians have to take the high road. It may, in the minds of some, be a difficult road, but I believe that we as parliamentarians have to recognize that life begins