

Abortion

is not an extension of the mother anymore than the astronaut is an extension of the spaceship.

The Member who introduced this Bill is from my home province and should be aware of the abortion statistics for B.C. We do not have a record we can be proud of. In fact, the figures are frightening. B.C.'s abortion rate just two years ago, in 1985, was over 50 per cent higher than the national average. That means that for every 100 live births in B.C., 26.1 abortions are performed. In 1984, 11,509 infants were killed by abortionists in B.C. Since 25 per cent of abortions in B.C. are repeat abortions, no one is going to convince me that all these women were in grave danger as a result of their pregnancies. What is now termed "therapeutic" abortion is nothing short of murder of unborn children.

Even pro-abortion advocates agree that abortion is not necessary to preserve the mental or physical health of pregnant women. A leading proponent of abortion, the late Dr. Alan Guttmacher, wrote: "Today it is possible for almost any patient to be brought through pregnancy alive, unless she suffers from a fatal illness, such as cancer or leukemia, and, if so, abortion would be unlikely to prolong, much less save her life".

The 1969 changes to the Criminal Code led to induced abortions becoming a deliberate decision to terminate the life of an unborn child. The changes recommended in Bill C-208 will have even greater repercussions.

I am now talking about the effects of abortion on the woman herself. I can certainly see that an unwanted pregnancy could create psychological stress for a woman or girl, but I believe abortion can only result in permanent irreparable damage to the mother's conscience and health. If a woman can just go out to her doctor for an abortion as soon as she finds out she is pregnant, without any counselling, she will have had the abortion in a moment of panic. Instead of encouraging this "aleness" we need to give these women our support and encouragement.

We must not let Bill C-208 pass. The unborn child deserves the protection all Canadians can give. Only in situations where the mother is in actual physical danger should an abortion even be considered.

I want to reiterate that abortion in Canada today is an elective procedure, mainly chosen for socio-economic reasons. It is no longer a medical service. This attitude must be stopped, and Bill C-208 does just the opposite. Our children are our future and they deserve our protection.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Brome—Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-208 introduced by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) deals with an important and delicate issue.

I am not without any opinion on the question of abortion, on the contrary, but like my fellow citizens, recent events such as

the legal proceedings launched against Dr. Morgentaler, have led me to ponder over it.

To understand how this question of abortion stands, it is necessary to consider more generally the response of Canadians to that issue. The Canadian way of life has in the past few years undergone several major changes which have altered the fundamental traits of people. Those changes relate to the number of desired children, sexual behaviour and the use of contraceptives.

While this country was evolving from a rural community to a highly industrialized society, different social expectations and the improvement of the standard of living have resulted in fundamental changes in individual activities, in what is expected out of life and in the attitude towards induced abortion.

Many changes have occurred in this area with respect to ideas held in the past, and there is no unanimity as to the current situation or future actions to be taken, far from it.

Abortion is a human concern with a high risk of personal and collective prejudices, which influence one's attitude towards facts, as to their interpretation and their use. Abortion is one thing in a group of issues which involve sexual behaviour and the family while including family planning, genetic consulting, extramarital birth and social security programs, that seldom have been rationally considered in that wider context.

Since abortion can become an almost explosive issue, it seems to me there is a certain segment of the general public which has chosen to ignore it. Efficient and direct solutions to serious differences have not been sought. One of the attitudes has been: "If you ignore it, it will fade away sooner or later." Other people with different views had this to say: "This is what is happening, this is what has to be done". Between those two positions, there is a range of deeply felt but not always easily expressed opinions that are held according to region, religious persuasion, political affiliation, culture or other social circumstances. Those views reflect on the one hand a determination to preserve the life and the physical health of mothers, and on the other hand a concern for the whole social environment of women and their family situation. Each of those two attitudes, respectively shared by a number of Canadians, is based on a different view of family ethics and the changing role of women in our Canadian society.

That issue deeply involves standard principles and professional ethics, and is therefore fraught with emotion. It will remain so because there is and there will be no easy solution. As in the cases of other major issues involving the concepts of life and death, abortion is a concern of many people who would have preferred avoiding the issue. But it is one of the difficult choices that any woman capable of becoming pregnant may have to face some time or other in her life. The large number of women who have resorted to abortion have been ostracized and have experienced some kind of stress that has left them in a permanent state of anxiety. They are concerned