

Private Members' Business

I am concerned, as I am sure many members are with the possible consequences of precipitate decisions taken by individuals but we can deal with that. I am also concerned by the potential misuse by third parties if we should begin on this road but we can deal with that. Speaking for myself, however, I have no right to impose my religious or spiritual values upon others of sound mind in the exercise of their judgment on what is surely the most important and most personal decision a person may feel compelled to make: the question of life or death.

In concluding my remarks I simply say again that it is an agonizing and moral choice, such as are the issues of capital punishment and abortion. However, we must remember that we are not an ecclesiastical court. We are the freely elected spokespersons of the Canadian body politic. They are concerned with this decision. They are concerned with its implications.

All that my colleague has asked in this motion is that the government address it without deadlines. Government should address it clearly and carefully, with the maximum of public input and consideration for all of those values we hold to be important.

I most sincerely urge all of my colleagues to give their support to this most important motion before us.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I will probably find this somewhat difficult to express, but I must speak on this issue. It is a moral issue as far as I am concerned. It is not just an ordinary situation.

I suspect that most of us in this House have at one time or another had a loved one who suffered seriously in his or her dying weeks or months. That is very difficult to accept and it is very difficult to forget.

However, we were given no guarantees when we were born, when we were conceived. We were not told that we were going to be happy all our lives or that we would suffer no pain. It seems to me that if we deviate from what I have studied and what I have learned with regard to life and its sanctity, then I cannot vote for a motion that would take a human life. To do so, to me, would be murder. To do so, to me, would be a betrayal of all of the things I have tried to stand for in my personal and public

lives. Therefore, if this motion comes before the House for a vote, I will naturally be voting against it.

• (1140)

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I was not intending to rise today but I think it is important that we acknowledge the assistance the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam has given us by bringing forward this motion. I have difficulty with the motion and I believe that most members in the House will have difficulty with the motion.

The whole question of euthanasia is something we are always faced with. It really is a question of whether, as a House, we are going to change the rules with respect to suicide and assisted suicide and where we would draw the lines. I suggest it is not a matter I am prepared to come out and be affirmative on at this stage. I believe my constituents would want to have a fair amount of opinion on the matter. One of the advantages of this debate is at least it brings it to the attention of the public.

I want to make a couple of comments. First, it has always been our law that a person is not entitled to take their own life. If that is the case, then they should not be entitled to have someone else take it for them. After all, life itself is sacred and the taking of life is itself a crime. The issue is whether the taking of life should be made not a crime under certain circumstances.

Surely it is as much a crime to take the life of someone who may be terminally ill as to take the life of someone who says: "I no longer wish to live in this world, will you assist me in killing myself?" Where do we draw the line between terminally ill because of disease or terminally in trouble because of a state of mind?

Where do we draw the line as to what is the real state of mind of someone who is terminally ill physically? Do they really want to end their life or do they only temporarily want to end their life as they go from one state of mind to another? Are they really suffering or are they in communion with God and with the hereafter, as we may want to put it? I do not know. We do not know. However, we have for a long time in our society provided that a person is not entitled to terminate their life and not entitled to have someone else terminate it for them.