

Criminal Code

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford), on behalf of Mr. Rodrigue, moves the motion No. 35.

That Bill C-150, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Parole Act, the Penitentiary Act, the Prisons and Reformatories Act and to make certain consequential amendments to the Combines Investigation Act, the Customs Tariff and the National Defence Act, be amended by deleting in clause 18 the words "or health" on line 5 on page 43.

Mr. Speaker: Does the house agree to adopt the said motion?

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, because of the absence of the hon. member for Beauce (Mr. Rodrigue), who has just got visitors in good health in his office, I would like to sponsor this motion.

Amendment No. 35 aims to delete from section 18 of Bill C-150 the words: "or health".

This would only mean deleting two words but would change the whole meaning of the bill and would be in line with the principles we have already put forward in this house.

In the course of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I shall try to confine myself to the subject of health. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that you look the picture of health today. Generally, a healthy person has a ready smile. We hope that good health will long keep you smiling in this house.

Mr. Speaker, we want to speak about health. Health is not easy to define. What is health? Where does it start, where does it end?

It is a subject which, according to medical books, does not require long developments, since health can be defined as the absence of illness.

It is the absence of all forms of illness, because often even a healthy man is a sick one who does not realize he is sick.

The present bill provides that for health reasons abortion may be allowed. Well, the word "health" has not been defined. We have not been told, clearly what illnesses pregnant women could contract due to pregnancy.

We have not been given in the bill what health reasons a doctor or an abortion committee could invoke to carry out an abortion. That has not been defined.

Books on medicine are all wrong when they deal with health, because it is a difficult subject to define.

In the Quillet dictionary, page 5175, health is defined as a state of a living being where all organs perform their functions freely.

[Mr. Speaker.]

In the Larousse Dictionary, at page 586, almost the same definition of health appears; it is the state of a person whose body functions well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to define health, unless we say that it is an absence of illness.

In the text of the bill, we are not told which are the illnesses that abortion could cure.

On the other hand, while studying medical books, we find that the illnesses pregnancy may bring about in a woman cannot be stated. However, some illnesses that pregnancy can correct in certain cases are specified.

I do not intend here to mention all the medical experiments of the past which have shown that some women who had been suffering until then of various illnesses had been cured for ever on the occasion of their pregnancy.

Personally, I have known a lady who had always worn glasses until her marriage. The moment she was pregnant, the doctor told her: as soon as you have your first child, you will no longer need glasses. Why? Because pregnancy brings maturity to a woman and involves unique biological, psychological and physical consequences.

Now, in certain cases, pregnancy corrects illnesses that otherwise a woman could not get rid of.

Since no such reference is made in the wording of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, we cannot accept minor ailments as diseases. A person might have an indisposition without necessarily being ill. One may feel indisposed one day, have a headache. Those are discomforts—not diseases. The wording of the legislation does not clearly specify what is health, what is illness, what is discomfort.

So because of everything we are told about health, because it is vaguely defined or even not at all, women will be able to claim they suffer minor ailments and still get an abortion.

And here, I refer to a doctor's testimony, that of Dr. Marcel Boivin, who says about such discomforts, and I quote:

In the name of such subjectivism, must the doctor or all professionals concerned readily comply with their patients' requests who are in a state of stress, because this is actually the case in point. Are doctors usually ready more or less to prescribed penicillin to every patient who asks for it?—