

but to respect the choice someone has made, which may be a terrible choice but not criminal.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to make some very brief submissions with regard to the motion before us. I intend to support the motion but, before commenting upon the reasons for supporting it, it is important to point out the inconsistency which is present with regard to some of those who intend to vote in favour of and some of those who intend to vote against the particular motion.

In my view life is sacred, regardless of what stage in life, whether it is before birth or after birth. It seems somewhat inconsistent for some of those who intend to vote for this particular motion, indeed the mover of the motion, to support capital punishment on the one hand and to be opposed to abortion on the other hand.

Similarly, a number of Members in the House, most notably in the New Democratic Party, are adamantly opposed to capital punishment—and some argue because human life is sacred—yet they appear to be unanimously in favour of abortion. There is a basic inconsistency in that logic.

In my view the central issue is: When does life begin? If we conclude that life begins after birth, then there is really no need for this particular amendment, because Section 7 of the Constitution provides that any person is entitled to life, liberty, and the other provisions in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In that event there is really no need to entrench the rights of the innocent unborn.

However, if we conclude that life begins at some moment before birth, it would follow that the unborn person, the foetus, should be entitled to each and every protection afforded to living human beings under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

● (1740)

Why would one distinguish between an unborn and a living person when in the Constitution itself we do not distinguish between black and white? We do not distinguish between short and tall. We do not distinguish between an able-bodied human being and a disabled human being. We say that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to every person. I should point out, Madam Speaker, that the Charter applies to those who are not Canadian citizens. Every person living in Canada is entitled to the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So we do not distinguish in the Constitution itself with regard to human beings.

Why would one distinguish between a living person and a foetus if one concludes that life begins before birth? The central issue, as far as I am concerned, is, when does life begin? On a balance of probabilities—I have come to the conclusion in my own mind—and I am basically voting according to my own morality and conscience on this issue, not

necessarily reflecting the views of the majority of my constituents, if you will—that life begins at some point before birth. Whether that is one second before birth, three months before or nine months before birth, life begins, in my view, before birth.

Let me give an example of why I believe that life begins before birth. If a pregnant woman were to be shot and murdered on the eve of giving birth, and both the foetus and the mother were murdered, would you argue that the person who perpetrates that crime should be charged with one count of murder or two counts of murder? I would argue that the perpetrator of that crime should be charged with two murders, that of the mother and that of the foetus. One could argue about property rights to substantiate one's argument with regard to when life begins. As a parent, if I were to will my assets to my children, and let us assume that I died the day before my wife gave birth, would anyone suggest that that unborn child should not be entitled, by law, to a share of my estate or my assets? I would suggest that the unborn child in terms of property rights should be entitled to a part of that estate. I notice that Members opposite are heckling. They may disagree with where I stand, but I ask that they grant me the common courtesy of listening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nunziata: I listened attentively when they spoke.

Unfortunately, we do not have an opportunity to speak at length. I know there are people on both sides of the House who intend to vote for and against this motion. I am appreciative of the fact that it is a free vote, at least as far as our Party is concerned and as far as the Government is concerned. I would ask that people in the House respect one another's point of view. I may disagree with those who believe in abortion who may be opposed to this motion, but I respect their points. I simply ask in return that they respect mine as a Member of Parliament. I am entitled to express my opinion and to vote this afternoon. I intend to vote for this resolution.

Mr. Vince Dantzer (Okanagan North): Madam Speaker, I am most pleased, as most Members are, to have the opportunity to speak on this important motion. It is an issue that is one of the most important to have come before the House during the years that I have been a Member. I believe it is a national scandal that we kill by abortion between 60,000 to 70,000 human beings. I commend the Hon. Member for Gray—Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) for his courage, conviction and determination to bring this matter before the House.

The matter is difficult, contentious and, as a result, the debate has been emotional and at times acrimonious. It is a matter of deeply held principles, and there can be little compromise between those who are for abortion and those who oppose it. Those who oppose the motion and are for abortion believe that easy access to abortion is the right of women who wish to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. They believe the issue is a personal one for the woman involved. Those in favour