

*Abortion*

stages are. That is not right. It is crassly political. The Government is pretending it is doing something when in fact it is doing absolutely nothing.

As far as the New Democratic Party is concerned, we have taken the position for a very long time that there should be a choice. That does not mean that the New Democratic Party is pro-abortion. What we are saying is that women should have some rights to choose. People who feel very strongly that abortion is wrong and would like to see the number of abortions reduced are the ones who should be dealing with public policy as our Party has been doing for a very long time. I think women have to have access to services. I do not know any woman who has lightly made the decision to have an abortion, and as a public health nurse I have dealt with many. It has never been an easy decision. Very often, if there were other alternatives, they would decide not to have an abortion.

We do not have child care, we very often treat women as sex objects and refuse to put services forward, and then have the gall to say they have a choice. Very often they do not have a choice. The New Democratic Party would like to see real choices for women.

I have heard for a long time many people talk about the fact that we do not value children, and we do not value children in our society. Certainly, this Government, which has put extra tax measures on families is not valuing children. We examined a reform Bill last week that actually increased the taxes on families, with two children rather than on a couple with no children. What kind of hypocrisy is that? If we really want to talk about a loving and compassionate society, we have to start putting in services to prevent the need for our women to make a decision to have an abortion. What has happened with the family planning programs? One-third of its funding was cut by this Government.

How can the Government want to have a more restrictive law and at the same time cut back on family planning? I think it is important that we look at the realities of some of the countries where there is liberalized abortion laws. Norway and Sweden made it compulsory to increase the education in sexuality in all the schools, and they found there was a dramatic reduction in the abortion rate in those countries. One country I know of which has rigid abortion laws is Brazil. It is totally illegal to have an abortion in Brazil, but there are over one million illegal abortions taking place in one year. There were 100,000 maternal deaths and over 10,000 abnormalities because of unsuccessful abortions.

When we talk about our ability to implement these laws, let us be realistic about it. I know there are a lot of people in this House who feel very powerful because they are going to be very rigid about this legislation. They are going to keep these women in line. They will force these women to carry the children they are unable to care for. I think it is really important to look at the numbers of women who are battered in our society. We know for a fact about one in eight women are battered. I would like to hear those same people talk about

services for those women. People who are afraid to put in a comprehensive child care program are saying they want to see a very rigid law on abortion. Those are the kinds of things we want to talk about if we want to reduce the number of abortions. I certainly do not accept the fact that by putting in rigid laws, or no laws at all and pretending something is going to be done, is an effective way to deal with the problem.

I think many of us in this House have looked at the kind of things that have happened and have decided that this is really a moral issue.

*[Translation]*

One hundred years ago, the Catholic Church declared that in the case of a baby of the male sex, abortion was allowed at 40 weeks of gestation and in the case of a baby of the female sex, after 80 days. Which means that there has been a lot of discussion on the subject. For years, people speculated on sex and age, but the only real issue that must be dealt with is: How can we reduce the number of abortions in our society? That is the only sensible question that has been asked here in the House. The next question is, what measures must be taken until a Bill is forthcoming?

*[English]*

The kinds of policies we need are positive public policies. We do not need policies that are more restrictive, that really do force decisions on people, that make women become again the victims of the back alleys. We must recognize that our society has had literally no effective law concerning abortion in the last six months. The Province of Quebec has not implemented it since 1976. Yet I hear people saying there is a terrible urgency, that we really have to deal with this issue very quickly, that it is a very chaotic situation we are in. I think that is an irresponsible kind of approach to this subject. It is irresponsible because it is attempting to fear monger.

I do not think that is what we want. We as a Party were quite willing to deal with this subject in a comprehensive way and be responsible and accountable to the Canadian people. We have not had the opportunity to do so in this House because the Minister speaks out of one side of his mouth saying it is urgent that we have some kind of law and at the same time brings forward only a resolution. As my Leader said last week, we had a three-headed monster in front of us and now we have a one-headed monster in front of us. It is non-specific. The motion does not give us any sense of where we are going.

● (1620)

As we look at it we recognize that we certainly do not want that to continue in the country. We do not want to see Canadians thinking that they are getting action and not getting it. That very hypocrisy is something that is an affront to the House of Commons.

As Members of Parliament we have been asked to be accountable. We have been asked to be responsible. Instead of that what we get is a Gallup poll in the House of Commons. I