

*Abortion*

decision for a late abortion is a greater tragedy. It is much riskier medically and much more stressful psychologically.

All of us recoil in a very common sense way from the idea of an abortion of a viable foetus, an eight-and-a-half-month old foetus to take a fairly extreme case. It is a different thing, and it seems to me to be very reasonable to take a different approach to abortions at a late stage. This approach of the Government, given the difficulties of the situation, is not an unreasonable compromise.

However, it is important that the decision to have recourse to an abortion for the purposes of health be that of a woman. In the case of a later pregnancy, the idea of having a second medical opinion is reasonable. There may be other ways of recognizing the differences as well. I do share the pro-choice principle that we cannot shut off access and that it is the woman whose life and health is at stake, and therefore, it must be the woman who makes that decision. Where I part company with some of my colleagues in my own Party and with other people who support the pro-choice position is that I do not share that position for all kinds of abortions.

My own Party is referred to in very blanket terms as the pro-choice Party, as if we all had the same point of view. That is not true. There is a majority position and a minority position, as there is in every Party. As well, we have to look at the context in which those debates took place. They took place in the context of the women's movement, with women claiming control and demanding the right to be able to make decisions without being thrown into desperate circumstances.

We now live in a different world. There is reproductive technology which permits other kinds of choices. I think it is morally wrong for abortion to be used for purposes of sex selection. It is wrong to decide that a male or a female child will be wanted and that the sex that is not wanted will be aborted. That is morally wrong, and I think we could have laws that would provide that women would have the right to abortions only in the cases of their own health but not in the cases of selecting the sex of the children.

We are now getting into a science fiction, futuristic scene. There is the possibility that women could try out pregnancies, and if they did not get foetuses with the right qualities, say a foetus that was not athletic enough or one that did not have the right physical or mental characteristics, they could abort them. This possibility now exists. Playing God in that way is inappropriate for human beings, and I do not think abortions for those reasons should be permitted. Those reasons are quite different from the reasons of the health or the life of the mother.

As well, the use of a foetus for medical or experimental purposes is morally wrong. A pregnancy for those purposes with an aborted foetus to be used for medical or experimental purposes seems to me to be wrong in principle. We could have a law that deals with that issue.

I note, however, that the motion before us put by the Government does not specify anything of this kind. I suspect we would find a very large number of Canadians who would share the horror I feel at the prospect of abortions for these

kinds of reasons, reasons which are quite unrelated to the life and the health of women themselves.

A more difficult question arises when we deal with the issue of foetal abnormalities. This is a grey area. Some people claim that a woman should have the right to make this decision no matter what. I find it inappropriate that a decision be made that a child should not live, that its life is not worth living. That kind of decision should not be made by the mother, the father or anyone else. We do not allow people to make that kind of decision after the birth of a child. If there is a disability, no one has the right to decide that that life ought not to be continued. If we do not make that kind of decision about children who have been born, it seems to me that that kind of decision should not be made by human beings when it comes to viable foetuses.

● (2350)

We can imagine that the prospect of this kind of traumatic pregnancy might be extremely stressful to the mother. It might have health consequences and there may be reasons for the mother to seek an abortion on those grounds. However, simply to say that the prospective quality of life of a foetus as a human being is not worth living and that therefore that person will not have the opportunity to live on the basis of our decision about that value, is an inappropriate decision for human beings to be making.

I think we do need a law on abortion. I would like to see it as an Act of Parliament rather than in the Criminal Code. I think that such penalties have been tried too much in the past and have not been very effective. They have caused a number of horrors. However, there are some issues on which we should be stating our position. We should be supporting practical measures to make unwanted pregnancies an infrequent or non-existent fact of life. We should be working on all the practical issues I suggested earlier from contraceptives to education, financial support for the family, parental leave, and child care. The Government has been negligent in all of those respects.

We must recognize that freedom of choice is often only rhetoric which does not mean very much. The reality is that very often a woman is pressured into an abortion by financial stress and also a lot of psychological stress from her partner. Sociologically we know that one of the major reasons for abortion is this pressure from the male partner, be it husband or boyfriend, of the pregnant woman.

There are instances in which we need further study such as the case of foetal abnormality. I support the proposal put forward by my Party that there be a Royal commission on reproductive technology. That would be very helpful. However, we do not need a Royal commission on issues such as the use of foetal tissue and the use of abortion for sex selection or the selection of other characteristics. Those issues are right or they are wrong and we have positions as moral persons on those issues. Some of them are perfectly clear and we can proceed on them without further study. However, I think that we do need further study on some issues and we should be prepared to amend our laws as we attain the results of those studies.