

*Criminal Code*

to use its discretion otherwise I shall have to conclude that the therapeutic abortion committee also, in accordance with the Act, would be compelled to allow the abortion.

In other words, if a mother or a pregnant woman asks a doctor for an abortion, whatever her reasons, the doctor does not have to consider those reasons. He can only make a note of that person's name and say: Madam, we shall have to submit your case to the therapeutic abortion committee. The only course open to the latter would then be to give its consent.

Now, what about the study of special cases? What about psychological troubles? What happens if there is no illness? Indeed, pregnancy—everyone admits it—is not an illness. It is merely a natural condition peculiar to women. The mother bears her child and is delivered nine months later. It is a privilege granted to women by nature itself.

Incidentally, a pregnant woman is not sick. It is suggested by this bill that pregnancy is an illness. In addition, the physician is considered as a robot or an abortion machine. It is apparently believed that he is unable to think, to consider, to reason and that he will be compelled to perform an abortion.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the minister to rise and prove to me on the basis of the bill itself and not with a far-fetched argument that the physician is free to perform an abortion and that the therapeutic committee enjoys as much freedom in this connection. I challenge him to prove it to me, not by stating an obscure argument as lawyers alone can put forward, but by clearly telling me so. If the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian episcopate and most Canadians have failed to find out that the bill grants such freedom to physicians, I feel that the minister himself will be unable to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with another aspect of this problem. For some people, the clause of the bill proposed by the minister will make abortion possible in a great number of cases. It is not necessary to develop that aspect, since it supplements the first, in the sense that here again no distinctions are made.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible not to grab this opportunity to plead in favour of doctors and their freedom. The amendments were introduced not because we are against the principle of therapeutic abortions, but rather because we want the law to state that a doctor will be free to perform abortions or not.

[Mr. Fortin.]

At this stage, Mr. Speaker, I wish to read something very interesting to the house. It is a letter from Mrs. Marjorie Ruwald, Secretary of the Ottawa Committee for the Protection of Unborn Children, dated February 19, 1969. It reads as follows:

Dear Sir:

Now is the time to honestly face the facts regarding the amendments to the abortion legislation that are proposed by the government.

Is the government really anxious to protect the life and the health of women?

I shall only read part of it, Mr. Speaker. Since there is only a limited number of women in the house, it may be interesting to know their viewpoint on this subject, since they seem to know something about medical matters. And it goes on:

If such is the case, what evidence do we have that the proposed changes would achieve that aim in any way?

This is more or less what I asked the minister a short while ago.

Never has the health of Canadian women got as much protection as today.

I then wonder on what grounds could a woman want to be aborted?

Canada has one of the lowest rates of mortality in the world for expectant mothers—about three deaths per 10,000 births. Is it really possible to believe that the proposed changes could bring about an even greater improvement?

She asks questions. I now come to what is more particularly related to the amendment, and I quote:

We must sympathize with the liberal M.P. who lost his wife because he turned down the abortion alternative.

She now refers to a former speech:

Such a tragedy cannot be blamed on the Canadian legislation. And the tremendous advance of medicine since then must also be kept in mind. The mortality rate of expectant mothers has been reduced from 10 to 1 in one generation.

Since medicine has advanced to such a degree that the rate of maternal mortality has been greatly reduced, why then compel a doctor to make abortions whereas, by his knowledge and the technical facilities at his disposal, he could save that child, give him a right to live, allow him to live?

Instead of forcing a doctor to kill a human being, let us make it a right and a duty for him to save that human being—

● (5:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.