

agencies of state should avoid legislating on theological matters. That is properly a matter for an individual's conscience, for religious bodies to which individuals choose to belong, and the religious tenets to which they choose to subscribe.

• (4:50 p.m.)

So often in the correspondence I receive on this subject it seems to be suggested that if this kind of bill were to pass, Parliament would be taking some positive action to say, in effect, that people must have abortions. Of course, this to me, as I think to any member of the House who has followed this matter, is arrant nonsense. It is this misconception of what is involved in changing legislation that should be stressed in a debate of this kind. I think this misunderstanding has been added to in part by some of the people who have coined the phrase "abortion on demand", because it creates the impression that if Parliament takes action to eliminate certain sections of the Criminal Code we will, in effect, be compelling people to have abortions, which of course is complete nonsense.

I have digressed from what I originally intended to say about this bill so as to deal with the question raised by the hon. member for Egmont. While we may not have reached a complete meeting of minds on the matter, I think we may have moved somewhat toward common ground. I have made the point that what we are doing is releasing this question from legislating on what people should or should not believe, freeing people to live according to the ordinary tenets of social legislation in such a way that they can follow their own beliefs in this matter regardless of what they may be. In a country which prides itself on freedom of religion and on freedom of belief, I think this kind of theological restriction should not be within the ambit of the Criminal Code of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-32, to amend the Criminal Code.

First of all I should like to point out that the object of this bill to remove from the Criminal Code the word "abortion", which would enable us to look upon abortion as an operation very similar to a tonsillectomy or a blood transfusion with which the government has absolutely nothing to do and which is left at the doctor's and patient's discretion.

Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely against this bill and in saying that, I am speaking on behalf of all my colleagues.

Our position is not only a matter of conscience for us as human beings, but it is also the point of view of 90 per cent of our electors.

As all hon. members know, abortion was openly questioned by the Ralliement créditiste at the time of the now well-known omnibus bill in the spring of 1969.

My position and that of my party is still exactly the same: time and government may change but a man's

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conscience does not, at least I hope so. It is quite often said that we should modernize our way of thinking. I agree on several points such as the union of churches, the modification of electoral legislation to lower the voting age to 18 and so on.

But the moment the subject is pure and simple murder of a child that cannot defend himself, I do not agree any longer. If I were to accept this principle I would have to agree that, for the economic welfare of pre-war Germany, it was alright to kill all the Jewish people who owned the biggest part of this country's capital.

If I did agree with the abortion principle I would also agree with the Felquistes ideas to the effect that federal or federalist politicians are harming the political and economic health of Quebec and so on.

However, I find from reading *Hansard* that the sponsor of this bill entertains a rather wide conception of freedom.

As recorded on page 935 of *Hansard* for November 5, 1970, the hon. member stated and I quote:

Freedom consists of freedom of the press, freedom of speech with the right to criticize and protest, freedom of movement, which includes the right to carry on one's chosen activities without fear or interference.

It does not include the right to destroy the basis of the society which is out guarantee of freedom.

I should like to call the attention of the House on this excerpt from the speech the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Chappell) delivered in the course of the debate on the bill to provide temporary emergency powers for the preservation of public order.

I am very anxious to hear the hon. member state whether he and his party consider that the basis of our society is simply not freedom to be born. Otherwise, what is our society heading for?

Why should we for days and months discuss the proper means to punish those who oppose our present system and, at the same time, try to legalize murder on request?

I might be told that the aim is to free the woman and to allow her to be the master of her own body, that the government should not interfere with a woman's alleged freedom to kill the fruit of her womb, but I do not believe in such a freedom. I do not think that to enjoy freedom one can justifiably kill another person, and I emphasize these words because evidently, before birth the child is already a human being distinct from his mother and possessing all the essential features of a human being.

Here, I should like to recall a fact that all hon. members have no doubt witnessed, at least those who keep small pets for the enjoyment of their children.

I for one have always allowed my children to keep a few rabbits as it keeps them busy and teaches them from infancy a sense of responsibility towards living beings. Now, if a female happens to litter while people are around, it will eat all its young to the last.

Such action is repugnant to me and certainly to all hon. members, after the explanation given.