

Government Orders

women making a choice, an incredible sort of fear of "just how do I support a child?"

• (1550)

We live in a country that has a million children living in poverty, where 50 per cent of the people going to the food banks are young families with children. We have such a total breakdown and failure of family policy and we say nothing about it.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare says, "Well, I understand the problem," and offers \$1.5 million and a couple of studies to deal with that basic breakdown of the family structure in this country and the support for families. What a terrible vacuum.

I listened to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Again, he gave a very heartfelt speech the other evening. He said that it is up to the churches to make this choice and totally absolved himself of any governmental responsibility whatsoever.

We in this Parliament cannot abdicate responsibility. Goodness knows, how can we be talking about the crucial fact of abortion when we know that many women face the choice of living in poverty, living with the prospect of their children being underfed and under-educated, of not having a chance in society. Do you think that does not affect their choice? Do you not think that that biases and distorts the choice that they are going to make? Of course it does. And yet we say nothing in this Parliament about it. It has nothing to do with the debate.

One good reason for voting against this bill and defeating it is to keep the pressure on the government to produce a decent family policy in Canada so that when women have to make a choice, they make a choice with a fair chance, with a proper system of support in this country. If we pass this legislation, then the thing gets forgotten and the pressure is off. For another 20 or 30 years, we can go on doing business as usual and not address what is becoming a national tragedy, embarrassment and serious handicap to the future of a million children or more in this country and that is a fact that they have not been given a proper chance in society. Surely Members of Parliament have to take that into account when they decide how to vote on this bill. They cannot, in any way, eliminate that broader question from the context in which a choice is going to be made by Members of Parliament.

The real question is how do you reduce abortions, how do you reduce the necessity of making those choices? As members have talked, and I have listened to most of the speeches, they have clearly signalled the fact that we need much better services. We need counselling for women. We need to make adoption a real legitimate choice.

My wife and I adopted a young boy four and a half years ago. He brought us enormous warmth and love and it is an incredible experience. I want to see this society do a lot more, not just to have children who are wanted but to have children who are needed in this society.

I do not see anything in this bill that says anything about that. I do not see anything that the government is doing to make that possible. In fact, what I saw three weeks ago, in the unemployment insurance bill, was the government bringing in a measure that clearly discriminated against adoptive parents. Yet, at the same time, its members have the nerve and gall to stand up and say, "We want to reduce the incidence of abortion," but they bring in an Unemployment Insurance Act which clearly contradicts that commitment.

I said in the House at that time to stay true to your beliefs. At least be consistent. The government ignored it. One minister stood up and said: "Well it does not matter. It does not count that we are discriminating against adoptive parents". Yet on the other hand we hear government members say: "But we want to reduce the incidence of abortion". That is hypocrisy. That is not fair.

That is one reason why I cannot vote for this legislation. I do not want to take the heat off this government. I want to keep the pressure on. I want to keep reminding government members every day that they owe an awful lot more to society to deal with this problem. We need much better legislation than this can produce.

If they would listen to the members of this House as they have spoken over the last two or three days, we could come up with a much better bill. I am not saying it would make everybody happy, because there are clear divisions on points of view between those two important values, one of which is right of women to make that choice in a society that has been dominated by males for so long. I do not think that we can compromise on that, but surely there is an awful lot more room to move in legislative terms, statutory terms, regulatory terms and