

I have checked all these letters and cards—we have received a lot of letters from our fellow citizens, and quite apart from that there were 300 phone calls to our office from people who wanted to be heard. The most interesting thing is that the people who signed these cards weren't afraid to sign their names, their addresses, their postal code, and I shall make a point of getting back to all of them with my comments on the vote we will be holding this Thursday at noon.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't easy to reach a consensus. Probably we will never have one here in the House. The majority of my constituents oppose abortion. I believe that here in Parliament the majority also oppose abortion. As my colleague, the Hon. Member for Outremont (Mrs. Pépin) said earlier: because some people claim that free choice would be their choice, just because someone is in favour of the freedom to choose, doesn't mean they like the idea of abortion.

There is another think that struck me just now, because when I discussed this question with a number of women in my riding, and in particular with my wife, almost every time I heard the comment, "It's a bunch of men, a bunch of chest-thumpers, who are trying to settle a woman's problem . . ." Certainly, if the wives or the mothers of some of the MPs who have spoken this evening had spoken in their place, I can promise you the speeches would not have been the same. I'm sure they would have been very different! Nobody is "for" abortion, Mr. Speaker, and I am certain that women who have had abortions must regret it. It isn't easy to make a choice, it isn't easy for an MP when he sees the feelings that have been expressed over the past three days. For example, on Monday more than 350 letters and cards were brought to me in my office, signed by residents of my riding. That has to be respected, Mr. Speaker, because normally scarcely 1 or 2 per cent of the population express their views by one means or another, either by mail or by phone, and when it seems to be so difficult for people to take one minute to make themselves heard, then when more than 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 letters arrive in our offices you have to take five minutes and read them and pay attention. Sometimes it's easy to read them because all of them say roughly the same things, or usually there's a standard card that gets repeated over and over.

● (0150)

Mr. Speaker, soon we will be voting on the question of abortion, and it's going to be one of the most difficult and even agonizing, choices I have ever had to make in my whole career.

Like many of us, I'm sure, I find myself confronted with the necessity to make a choice that conflicts, be it even partially, with my personal convictions. It seems to me that in all intellectual honesty, I must place myself on the side of the opinion expressed by a majority of my constituents, several thousands of them. I have a duty to reflect the general opinion, the consensus, that has become obvious in the riding of Duvernay, and to follow the avenues and the explicit indications and the will clearly expressed by my voters in Duvernay,

### *Abortion*

that is, to vote against the motion introduced by the government which we are considering here today. But I would be ready to vote for the amendment moved by my colleague the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Reimer), Amendment A, which I would like to read into the record for the benefit of my fellow citizens:

That all of the words in the motion after the words "to protect the unborn; and" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

Such legislation, giving pre-eminence to the protection of the foetus, should prohibit the performance of an abortion except when:

—two independent qualified medical practitioners have, in good faith and on reasonable grounds, stated that in their opinion the continuation of the pregnancy would, or would be likely to, endanger the life of the pregnant woman or seriously and substantially endanger her health and there is no other commonly accepted medical procedure for effectively treating the health risk; but grounds for such opinions are not to include

(I) the effects of stress or anxiety which may accompany an unexpected or unwanted pregnancy, or

(II) social or economic considerations.

Mr. Speaker, Amendment A, by my colleague the Hon. Member for Kitchener, seems to me to be very reasonable.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, even though I have received many very very touching letters, and some people even sent us videos, very touching photographs, associations that wrote, like SOS Bébé, the association of Quebec physicians for life . . . We even had certain people, American groups, who sent us their views, who asked us to be very careful before we made a decision. I also had a letter from a group represented by a Mr. Mongeau in my riding, and I'd like to read a paragraph of it:

"Dear Mr. Della Noce,

The lawyers, doctors and nurses of "Respect de la Vie", with whom we are working very seriously, provided us with figures in the past few weeks showing there were approximately 700 abortions every week in Quebec. In Ontario it is worse, approximately 1,100 per week. And the rest of Canada accounts for the remaining cases, out of a total of 110,000 abortions a year.

Canada = a great country dying."

This letter was sent to me in July of 1988 and it's signed by Mr. Mongeau, who asks me very earnestly to think long and hard before voting and to take into account all the petitions and letters that have been sent to us, and he finishes his letter by saying,

"Vote thoughtfully. Thank you."

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, it's getting very late and I know there are still people who want to speak. It seems obvious to me that in my capacity as representative for Duvernay, I have a duty to set aside, in all honesty, my personal convictions and express those of the majority whose voice I am here today, as I did in the vote on the death penalty. I have a great deal of respect for my constituents, because as an MP we have to wear the MP's hat. We aren't ordinary citizens any longer, we are citizens at the service of our community, and I say to my community, "I am here to say what you have told me to say. Even though it's 1:55 in the morning and you're asleep, my duty is to do what you have asked me to do. And that is what I have done today in this House, with all due respect." I know there will be some people who won't agree with my choice. It is impossible that everybody could approve.