

to self-determination to commit suicide. That was the end of it.

• (1120)

That law has now been overturned and it looks as if Kevorkian can continue his practice, without any control whatsoever, over the kinds of activities in which he has been involved. This is unacceptable and really not a solution at all.

The argument is that this is a guarantee of liberty, that this legislation, if the government would accept it, would give Sue Rodriguez and a host of other Canadians who wish to pursue a physician assisted suicide the opportunity to be relieved from future pain and degradation and to have the right to control one's body. It is the right to avoid pain and suffering, and it is of course the right to avoid the indignity of a complete loss of ability to control any function of life.

When my colleague asks what right do they have, they do have rights. There is a right to liberty. There is a right to self-determination. There is a right to control one's body. There is a right to avoid pain and suffering. There is a right to avoid loss of dignity and there is even a right to commit suicide. The latter is not illegal. If a person wants another to assist them to commit suicide, we must consider this.

I would like to put forward another argument. The court originally dismissed this but it is certainly worthy of consideration. It is discriminatory, if there is an individual who is handicapped and one who is not, if the one individual who is handicapped by a chronic debilitating disease wishes to commit suicide, they may be impaired and unable to carry out that function without the assistance of a physician or someone else, preferably a physician.

There is a solid argument that one class of citizen because they are not disabled can in fact carry this out and another class of citizen who because of their disability may be competent mentally but unfortunately physically are unable to carry out the task competently. We wind up with a situation where we have created two classes of people by a law which essentially discriminates.

I would like the House to consider this legislation as empowerment, the ability of individuals to exert their

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own self-determination over their lives. These people are going to die, there is no question about it. They are going to die a painful and degrading death and they have made a decision that they wish to determine the time their life will end. Unfortunately, we remove that empowerment from them. We say that we know best. In this day and age I really think we must reconsider the current law.

We need to examine this issue, especially this narrow issue put in front of us by Sue Rodriguez. We must empower an individual who is in a very terrible set of circumstances. We must give them the power to exert some control over their lives, even if it is to relieve themselves of suffering and degradation. We must give that empowerment to them.

The ironic thing with Sue Rodriguez is that the progress of her disease will render her completely incapacitated. She will not be able to commit suicide and she will not be able to communicate. She will still be conscious but unfortunately unable to do anything.

If we were to pass a law that permitted physician assisted suicide and Sue Rodriguez and her physician agreed on the circumstances when the suicide would be carried out, Sue Rodriguez's life would be longer. She would be able to live longer. It is an irony. If she is going to commit suicide she will have to do it sooner, when she is capable of controlling the circumstances and doing it effectively, which means her life will be shorter unless she can use the assistance of a physician. It is not just Sue Rodriguez, it is all other Canadians who find themselves in this circumstance and who wish to end their lives in order to prevent that pain and suffering.

We could be in a position to extend their lives by amending that legislation.

I would also like to cite the case of Dr. Kevorkian in the United States.

• (1125)

Sue Rodriguez has a commitment from a physician regardless of the outcome. Whether Parliament or the government puts forward legislation in this House, whether the Supreme Court gives her the right, a physician has said that he will assist her to commit suicide. Ultimately this is a humanitarian act.