

Criminal Code

Mrs. MacInnis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This operation relieved a woman in her late thirties who had several children. She had health problems which her doctor had told her were serious. Her income was very modest and her husband had refused to consider any sterilization of himself even though he was in sympathy with what she was doing and in full knowledge of it. I may say that I witnessed this operation with her permission. This woman had conscientiously but unsuccessfully tried birth control methods, with the acquiescence and co-operation of her husband. The operation brought about relief from a situation with which neither she nor her husband felt able to cope. Within 15 minutes of the operation being performed the woman got up from the table, had a cup of coffee and on the arm of her young daughter went home and has been perfectly well ever since.

This is the truth about most abortions, and I wish it was better known. Those people who are keeping this truth shrouded in an emotional fog and who are using the ideas of the middle ages to prevent us from entering into the 20th century are not doing a service to the Canadian population. Let them leave these ideas back in the middle ages together with the torture chamber, the rack, the thumbscrew and those other things which belong to a less enlightened age and which are not in accordance with the needs of today.

The whole subject of abortion should not be treated as a criminal matter but as the medical, personal and social matter which it is. It should be dealt with in such a manner as to provide justice to every citizen regardless of his or her income. It should be dealt with in such a manner as to provide flexibility for individual cases and for different schools of thought in Canada; there should be flexibility to accept new methods and techniques. The only way to meet these requirements is to remove the subject of abortion completely from the Criminal Code and leave it to those directly concerned, namely, pregnant women, their doctors and those members of the medical profession required. The bill now before us does not do this, but pending the introduction of such legislation I serve notice that while I am in health I shall present proposals for such legislation until we get it. Meanwhile, we in this group are glad to go on supporting this bill right through to the end of this debate, and we hope that the end will not be far off.

[Mr. Speaker.]

[Translation]

• (12:30 p.m.)

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) for having readily participated in this extremely important debate, and at long last, the minister was seen to smile.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, after such an extended debate on the question, the only remarks made in this house were against abortion; because of this, we are pleased with the contribution of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

However, throughout her speech, one could perceive the main reason why she is in favour of such a legislation. Of course, we had foreseen it, since we have been denouncing it since the very beginning of this debate. And all the sentimental and social arguments put forward by the hon. member are precisely those that have been ascribed to us, and that is the reason why we continually wandered during this debate from considerations entirely unrelated to the subject matter, that is whether abortion is a murder or not, whether it should be allowed for health reasons or what is the nature of the abortion.

Scientifically and medically speaking, what is abortion? The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway was entirely off the track in this regard.

Why are we told about illegal abortion? There is nothing in this clause that will control illegal abortion. On the contrary, clause 18 will promote illegal abortion and I want to substantiate my statement with very specific arguments.

In those countries where abortions were authorized, on the ground that there were too many illegal ones, what happened? Illegal abortions quadrupled after the legislation authorizing abortions was passed.

It is very easy to understand. Why? What happens? Let us suppose this bill is passed and abortion is legalized according to the provisions of clause 18. What will happen to all those women and young girls who are just waiting for abortion to be legalized to resort to the provisions of the law? In those extremely numerous cases, these young girls or women will come before the hospital therapeutic abortion committee to ask for an abortion. The doctors will discuss the case, consider whether it is justifiable or not and after having studied the condition of the patient, will decide against an abortion because the life of the mother is certainly not in danger nor is her health affected. What will happen?