

● (8:20 p.m.)

Whatever the authors of the Criminal Code may say, life begins before the birth of the child and the severance of the umbilical cord.

The physicians who came to testify before the standing committee on justice and legal affairs, on March 25—and others before them—especially Drs. Légaré and Justras proved, without doubt, that life exists well before birth.

The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Wooliams) asked the following question of Dr. Légaré, a gynecologist at the St-François d'Assise Hospital, in Quebec City:

From the medical point of view, do you agree with the definition given in the Criminal Code?

And the physician replied:

From the medical point of view, no...but the unborn child is definitely a human being. The slides of Dr. Justras—

—will give you a medical proof.

Doctor Justras, head of the Pediatrics Department of the Arthabasca hospital, showed a series of slides which proved beyond doubt that life exists, imperfect maybe but real none the less, because when the foetus is 24 days old its heart starts to beat. Some Swedish physicians have ascertained that a foetal heart was still beating one or two hours after an abortion.

Thanks to the transparencies of Dr. Justras, it was possible to observe that on the twelfth week, a foetus sucks his thumb.

Mr. Speaker, there are even some members who have been doing the same since they have been here and who continue to do so.

On the sixteenth week, the eyes of the foetus are developed and on the twenty-sixth week, it is viable.

Life is by then so well established that in the Model Penal Code approved by The American Law Institute, paragraph 3 of section 230, dealing with abortion, it is stipulated, and I quote:

When the abortion is performed after the 26th week of pregnancy, it is murder in the second degree.

This referred to illegal abortions.

What shall we think now of therapeutic abortion. This is what I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker. It is precisely the problem that we study tonight. What shall we think now, I say, of medical abortion which the Minister of Justice wants to include in the Criminal Code in order to justify abortion?

Criminal Code

This is what was said on this subject by Dr. R. Gordon Douglas, professor of obstetrics and gynecologist at the Medical College of Cornell University in the United States. This is no idle talk; we are not dealing here with back-street butchers or with blue-stocking gossips:

If we make use of all our therapeutic armamentarium, we can put an end to all the troubles that can arise, for a mother, from the birth of a child.

In other words, thanks to medical knowledge in this field, the life of the mother is no longer in danger when she is bearing a child or when she gives birth to a child.

Professor Quay, in the book which I quoted a while ago, proves, from pages 181 to 220, that appropriate prenatal care and attention can practically always save the life of the mother without resorting to therapeutic abortion.

At this stage, I should like to say to the supporters of abortion that it is almost an insult to medicine to try and make believe that doctors are incapable to cure illness except by killing the foetus, while doctors have proved in the committee that therapeutic abortion is futile today, because treatment can help to cure the diseases that can sometimes attend pregnancy.

On the other hand, Dr. K. P. Russell, from the county hospital of Los Angeles, writes in the Journal of the American Medical Association and I quote:

For the past ten years, we have grown more and more aware of the fact that several indications—

—and here, he is of the same opinion as Dr. Légaré who was a witness to the committee of justice and legal affairs—

—we have grown every day more aware of the fact that many an indication in favour of therapeutic abortion is no longer valid...in the light of continuing improvement in the field of medicine and surgery.

Professor Quay, on the other hand, believes that if therapeutic abortion is to be legalized, it will hamper research in the field of gynaecology, with the purpose of saving human lives and that doctors will do it the easy way by destroying the foetus.

He also makes no bones about stigmatizing the mothers who seek therapeutic abortion.

A mother who sacrifices the life of her child in order to protect her own health is lacking something somewhere...and if there were to be some authority to decide whether to destroy an innocent life for social reasons, the interests of society would command to sacrifice the life of