

Government Orders

There are many hospitals that recognize and respect those views of health care workers. The ones that do permit health care workers to arrange their assignments to exclude participation in abortion procedures. However, there is no legal obligation at the moment and, to the best of my knowledge, there never has been a legal obligation for a hospital not to discriminate against a health care worker who refuses to assist in an abortion.

That is not the case in other countries. In at least 44 states of the United States and in the United Kingdom there is such a conscience clause. It is written into the legislation to protect health care workers in this sort of a situation. Section 4 of the British Abortion Act of 1967 states:

Subject to subsection (2) of this section, no person shall be under any duty, whether by contract or by any statutory or other legal requirement, to participate in any treatment authorized by this Act to which he has a conscientious objection:

Provided that in any legal proceeding the burden of proof of conscientious objection shall rest on the person claiming to rely on it.

I fervently hope that if this bill is passed in principle on second reading that there will be opportunity for that sort of amendment to be put, passed and carried because there is real concern out there on the part of health care workers about this issue.

I notice that you are already indicating that my time is drawing nigh. I have two or three other points I would like to make, very briefly. I hope with your indulgence and the indulgence of the House I can do that.

In the first case, I want to say that in the short five years I have been in this House I have seen some spectacular things done in changing bills in committee. I have not been a member of too many legislative committees, but in the ones I have been a member of I have seen some really spectacular things done in the way of changes. One of them, the Shipping Conferences Act, I can remember was changed entirely. The whole concept changed entirely from the day it was introduced into this House until the day it came out of that committee and finally was passed, in an entirely different form than it went in.

I remember being a member of another legislative committee on amendments to the Criminal Code. At that time it was suggested we should add another

amendment which would allow for the introduction of a new offence, war crimes. That was rejected by the Parliamentary committee. Shortly after, almost instantaneously, and before the Parliamentary committee reported, the Deschêrne Royal Commission was appointed and out of that came an amendment to the Criminal Code dealing with war crimes. So I do not believe that there are very many things that are not possible to be done in this House and to be done by a committee if there is goodwill on all sides.

• (2030)

I believe that at this stage, notwithstanding my views, it is premature for us to decide whether this bill is good, bad or indifferent. I believe that we should see what happens when it does go to committee. It may very well be that an entirely different bill will come out of committee.

The government has indicated that this may not be the case. But, who knows. I am one who believes there should be changes made. I fervently believe that there should be changes made in this Bill C-43. I fervently hope that we will see those changes made and amendments put at committee.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate, I think as all members do, taking this issue and this debate very seriously. It has meant a lot to many of us in our election campaigns, and much of the discussions that we have had with our constituents concerning Bill C-43, an act regarding abortion that the government has introduced. It deals with a very important issue that we take seriously, and I think I could speak for many members.

In our election campaigns, when we are asked for our stand and our position on abortion, probably most of us in this House take the time to let our constituents know exactly where we do stand. It is because we owe our constituents, on this very important issue, an opinion and advice so that they know, when they are voting for us or against us, where we stand on this issue.

I can safely say that I support my party's position on this legislation. It is the same as my own personal view when it comes to abortion. The debate has been led by our critic in this area, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. As well, I had the opportunity to read