

Criminal Code

of the innocent unborn child or is it the fault of the society which is so critical of her? Suppose a mother does not want her child because she is economically poor or inadequately housed. Do we solve this problem by allowing her to have an abortion or should we, as legislators, do something to provide conditions in which such a woman would want to bring her child into the world? I do not think we solve problems such as these by creating another. Many of those who submit to abortion find themselves in a much worse condition years or even months later. They find that the abortion weighs on their consciences. They regret what they have done. Anyone who is married and has children realizes that a wife is very often in a depressed state during some stage of her pregnancy. Are we to judge what should happen to an unborn child because of what may, after all, be only a temporary condition? I do not think so.

The amendment put forward by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce makes a significant change in the wording of the bill before us. The operative words are: "to endanger her life or seriously and directly impair her health." In my opinion this may be a justifiable condition for abortion in line with the consideration of self-defence which I have mentioned. Simply to say that life or health could likely be endangered, or could be endangered, is putting the matter far too broadly. We have been told that from a legal point of view there is no difference between the original wording and the wording of the amendment. I submit there is one real difference, leaving aside the legal implications. The original wording would create a climate for abortion in Canada; people would believe that abortions were very easy to obtain. It may be we are doing many women a disservice by seeking to pass the legislation in its present form, because I do not think they will find abortion quite as easy to obtain as they thought it was going to be.

It would have a far better effect in Canada if we were to change this legislation in such a way as to avoid any impression that there is nothing wrong with taking the life of an unborn child or that it is permissible in any and all circumstances. I do not think it is, and I do not think this legislation should suggest that it is. If those who drew up this bill feel that the foetus is not a human being, then I believe they have drawn up bad legislation. If they say it is a human being, then we should be very careful about the conditions under which abortions are allowed to take place.

For these reasons I support the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. In no way do I feel that I have any responsibility to legislate morality, nor that the government has any responsibility to do so. That is not the question. I would certainly not subscribe to that view. But I strongly feel that we are under an obligation to protect the lives of our citizens, including the unborn child.

I should like to put on record one further quotation, this time from the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1959 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. I presume Canada subscribes to this declaration. The preamble states in part:

Whereas the child, by reason of its physical and mental maturity, needs special safeguards and care, including proper legal protection before as well as after birth—

● (4:10 p.m.)

It is interesting that here is a recognition by a world body in which we participate of the rights of the child both before and after birth. From that body emanates a declaration that there is need to protect the child both before and after birth. I feel that, without question, the foetus, at the stage of its development being considered here in connection with abortions, is a human being. I feel that abortions should only be permitted under very strict control for the purpose of protecting a woman's life or if her health will be seriously and directly impaired. Such an abortion would be, in my view, a case of self-defence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise and talk about the amendment proposed by the previous speaker and I think it is quite important at this time to draw the hon. members' attention and to express my ideas on this amendment.

We should consider whether this amendment goes any further, goes far enough or goes too far in its attempt to make the bill more explicit. The amendment reads as follows:

That Bill C-150... be amended by deleting in clause 18 the words "or would be likely to endanger her life or health" on lines 4 and 5 on page 43 and by inserting the following words: "endanger her life or seriously and directly impair her health".

I do not think there should be any uncertainties as to the reasons behind the position of the previous speaker who spoke in support of that clause or that amendment for allowing