

*Criminal Code*

we do not expect a majority vote, but rather, and still better, an unanimous decision so that there will be no possible mistakes. Human life will be protected and the rights of foetuses will be recognized.

● (5:50 p.m.)

On the other hand, supposing the members of the therapeutic abortion committee admit that pregnancy endangers the woman's life then, Mr. Speaker, it would not be difficult for them to agree unanimously.

But for cases when one or more of the three members doubt that the life or health of the mother is threatened on account of pregnancy, we must legislate in favour of the preservation of life, and avoid murders or homicides that might otherwise be encouraged by irresponsible legislation which did not receive thorough consideration.

We are seeking unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, for security purposes in every respect, and I should like, with your permission, to touch on those points.

The first important point we have to deal with, with respect to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Beauce, is the following.

Mr. Speaker, if the mother's life is really endangered because of her being pregnant, then it would be easy to obtain unanimous consent within the committee.

However, Mr. Speaker, all cases that are likely to come up will have to be considered and studied by the committee. The therapeutic abortion committee will have to consider each individual case. It will have to consider scientific data, documentary information, X-rays, etc. in order to determine whether the life of the woman is threatened by the pregnancy.

So, the therapeutic abortion committee would not base its decisions on all kinds of considerations not directly related to the life of that woman, but on scientific considerations, to determine whether or not the life of the woman is in danger.

The members of the committee will have to be in agreement. Each one has his personal experience. Each one has his own skill. Each one has acquired knowledge in those fields and is able to give an opinion in which confidence may be placed I think, in the majority of cases.

Mr. Speaker, if two of the members of the committee say: "We are in favour of issuing a certificate allowing the abortion of such and

[Mr. Fortin.]

such a person" that is legitimate because her life is in danger. They have established that, through examination. If the other doctor does not agree—we have every right to suppose that he too is competent, that he too is respected and respectable from the point of view of professional ethics—he must therefore have personal reasons to oppose the abortion.

Now it will be very difficult for him to defend his case if the other two can give scientific proof of their stand, that the life of the mother is really in danger.

There might then be some discussion within the committee and probably, or rather certainly, the two doctors who agree will manage to convince the third, who disagrees, that obviously the life of the mother is in danger. That carries a lot of weight in the decision.

That is why we say that, in such a case, where the life of the mother is really in danger, unanimity will force the doctors to seek out scientific reasons, to seek out scientific proofs.

We do not request unquestionable evidence—nothing is certain in this world, particularly in the scientific world. Everything is developing and progressing, so that it will be more and more possible to determine and to establish if really the life of a woman is endangered because of her pregnancy. Therefore, it will be easy for the members of this committee to decide unanimously whether the mother's life is really in danger.

In another case—it was the second point I wanted to discuss—the woman can go to a doctor and ask for an abortion. She can put forward all sorts of reasons. She can refuse her husband because she disagrees with him, she wants to divorce, she does not want to be encumbered with another child, or because she does not want to stay attached to the house. Or if she is unmarried, she can refuse motherhood.

There might be an infinite variety of cases. Let us just take one case that every member could imagine: if a woman presents herself before a therapeutic abortion committee, and asks them to issue a certificate, then, the committee would have to establish whether scientifically, from the medical point of view, the life or the health of this woman are probably and certainly endangered.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this committee will not be able to establish scientifically that the life of this woman is in danger, because, scientifically professionally these doctors will not be able to establish that in some of the cases