

*Criminal Code*

indications in them. An abortion often has bad effects on a woman and induces in her feelings of guilt and hostility. One must wonder whether by alleviating one problem we are not creating another.

After an inquiry, we can claim that the number of therapeutic abortions, in the hospitals of the province, is at this time very low and nil in most cases. Owing to the very restricted number of medical instructions, the enactment of this bill would but increase to a very small extent the number of therapeutic abortions, but only applications for abortion with their dilemma will be more numerous.

The medical abortion committees mentioned in the bill should exist only in hospitals where there is a sufficient number of doctors and consultants in each specialty so that the decision might result from a fair assessment free of any subjectivity.

During our inquiry, we could see that most of the medical boards and boards of directors of the hospitals of the province of Quebec officially and formally objected to the establishment of these medical abortion committees, in their own hospitals. Because of the professional ethics and the constant orientation of their profession, hospital doctors are very reluctant to be on such committees and moreover they will not make any medical abortion of their own.

It is to be noted that this bill does not take into account the religious and moral beliefs of a multitude of hospital doctors who are afraid to be subjected to legal proceedings for not performing what they consider as a murder not in keeping with their professional ethics. Do not doctors unceasingly work to protect their patients against death?

In view of these considerations, the Quebec Hospital Medical Board Association is still of the opinion that the federal government tried to deal with this problem by means of a quick bill which seems to solve everything but which in fact makes more serious the problem of illegal abortion.

The Association is of the opinion that this problem should be considered from a medical point of view and finds it necessary to take up the question of abortion only after scientific studies in depth of the whole question of abortion, sterilization and contraception, before any other proposal is introduced by the government.

In my opinion, only a Royal Commission could study this question adequately.

That is the concern and the anguish expressed by the Quebec medical profession about this bill for legalization of therapeutic abortion.

Mr. Speaker, I also speak on behalf of the Canadian bishops about this amendment brought forward by this government. According to the views expressed by the Canadian bishops, the liberalization of legal abortion, far from decreasing illegal abortions, would only increase their numbers. The Bishops base their contentions on the experience of

several countries which have already enacted legislation such as the proposed bill. I quote:

With legislation which depreciates, by the very exemptions it allows, the right to life of the foetus, one would promote the development of loose morals which fail to consider abortion as a real crime.

Moreover, they remind us that the legislator should not underestimate the educational value of the law, because it is an obvious fact that men are prone to consider as morally right that which is permitted by law.

• (8:20 p.m.)

The Catholic bishops appeal to the conscience of all, and especially of doctors, lawyers, politicians and all those who are in public life and mold public opinion, to study that question carefully.

Taking my stand on the serious considerations of the Quebec doctors and the Canadian bishops, I request that be withdrawn from the omnibus bill that part of the bill aiming at amending section 237 of the Criminal Code on therapeutic abortion. The problem of abortion is too big with consequences, in my opinion, to appear with homosexuality, lotteries, driving while intoxicated and a few other minor offences within an omnibus bill which might rouse little opposition in parliament. The bill on abortion should get from parliament the same treatment given major problems like finance, education, etc., and be referred solemnly to a royal commission.

Mr. Speaker, I join with the Canadian bishops to propose a programme to which the state must devote its energies, in order to promote respect for human life at every stage of its development, through education and legislation which itself must reflect that respect, and not by presenting a bill like the one we are discussing, a too simple solution to a very serious and very complex problem.

That programme would include a serious study of the frequency of clandestine abortions and on the means to prevent them. Moreover, it would include also active research and the implementation of a programme of assistance to married or unmarried mothers exposed to difficulties because of our present economic and social system.

I appeal again to your understanding and your sense of values, the most important of which is certainly the protection of human life. During the debates on the abolition of capital punishment, you will remember that Canada had persisted in respecting liberty, having regard to life and death, in order to protect those fundamental human rights.

[Mr. Beaudoin.]