

sense of the reality of many women's lives, especially in the era of backroom butchers.

On the other hand, there is a strong feeling of respect for life that many of us share, and my own case, it grows from the traditions of the Mennonite Church, the Anabaptists movement going back to the 16th century.

We have tried to be consistent about respect for life. As a people we have always opposed capital punishment, although there have been individual people who held opposing views. We have taken a pacifist role, a non-resistant role in times of conflict. The need to respect life goes back many centuries in our family and, indeed, my own being.

I talked to many women in trying to come to terms with this particular piece of legislation. I talked to them as a Member of Parliament and somebody who had to make a decision here, knowing how irritating it is for many women to hear so many male voices talking about this issue. They opened up on this issue because they feel very strongly about it, whether they considered themselves pro-choice or pro-life. What surprised me in those conversations is how many women that I knew and knew well, many of whom came from what might be considered or called good homes with a religious upbringing and so on, had actually had abortions, many of them illegal and many of them outside of the country.

I listened to these women. From what I heard, the presence or absence of a particular abortion law was the least of factors in their decision. What precipitated their choice was in fact the circumstances of their lives and what they saw as the potential future for themselves and their child.

Therefore, it seemed increasingly clear to me that if we in this place are serious about reducing the numbers of abortions in this country and reducing unwanted pregnancies, we must address all the factors involved. We must give serious priority, for example, to the issue of child poverty, on which we are having a debate tomorrow. Our leader's last speech will be on child poverty, and it will be worth listening to and acting on by all of us.

The abuse of women and children in this country must come to an end. I, as a Member of Parliament, had a case this summer where I had no option that I could pursue to

Government Orders

prevent a 14-year-old girl from going home to a community and a home where her 16-year-old brother was going to sexually abuse her. I could find no recourse to keep that girl from going back. If that girl became pregnant, I would not want to make the moral choice on what should be done in that situation.

Then there is the whole question of adoption, which is certainly a positive alternative, but is really mired in a morass of bureaucracy and a totally inhumane approach to family structures, especially in cultures that are not mainstream cultures.

We do not have training and support for young mothers. We do not have a national child care policy. We do not have safe and effective birth control, at least to any kind of standards that today's science can make possible. We do not have adequate sex education in many schools. We do not have adequate family planning. The role of men in this is all too often ignored.

As well, any legislation that I could personally support would have to include, first of all, the right of conscientious objection for all health care professionals who disagree with a particular law. Second, it would have to have equal effect for all women in this country, be they rich or poor, and in whatever community they happen to live.

Therefore, I have decided that I would not support any legislative initiative on abortion that did not come to terms with these priorities and would leave them undressed.

In fact it seems to me that it is morally inconsistent for people who say that they want to see fewer abortions to put more energy and commitment into lobbying for a strict abortion law than they put into the struggle for better lives for women and children. Indeed, I have observed with some sadness that some of the members of this House who are most adamant in insisting that the full weight of criminal law should be brought to bear on women in these circumstances are also the most ardent supporters of Margaret Thatcher's vision of a dog-eat-dog world and the social Darwinism that goes with it.

Therefore, I cannot in good conscience even try to sort out the deep moral and ethical questions which surround this issue until such a time as a genuinely humane and caring attitude towards women and children permeates