

Criminal Code

and other religions to the idea of abortion. That objection does not seem to me to be insurmountable or to be a reason in itself why I should vote for that point of view. If a Roman Catholic woman feels strongly enough about her religion, presumably she would not consent to an abortion in any case.

The people concerned have an option; therefore I do not see there is any obstacle to anybody reaching a decision. If a faith has this as an important part of its philosophy, presumably those who live under or by that faith will carry out the dictates of that philosophy. But there are other points on which I am not satisfied with regard to this question and I hope in the committee we will hear some evidence on them.

I realize that the issue of abortion has been scouted in another committee of the house in recent years, but I understand that much of that hearing was concerned with the religious opinion, perhaps I may even call it the emotional opinion, pro and con on the issue.

I also understand that some medical evidence before the committee indicated that a person who is aborted for good reason may find it more difficult in the future to bear children easily or without hazard to herself. It is this medical point that I would like to have cleared up when the committee considers the abortion portion of this bill.

I have two other points, Mr. Speaker. These concern the formula arrived at by the government in bringing this measure before us. The bill refers to accredited hospitals. Sir, only some 50 per cent of the hospitals across Canada are accredited, I gather. The provisions of this bill would probably be quite unworkable in remote areas or in most rural areas of Canada because the type of hospital situated in such areas is not accredited. Accreditation is not something which comes automatically. I understand it can be withheld because, for example, a hospital is too small, even though nothing is said against the standard maintained or the type of care provided. The hospital may simply be of a humble nature, without a large staff or certain types of equipment. I think the government, and certainly the committee, will wish to look at the formula again to decide whether it is even workable.

• (8:40 p.m.)

In the second place, the number of doctors to be involved in the panel referred to in the formula raises a question in my mind. How

[Mr. McCleave.]

can places like Churchill, Manitoba, or similar towns removed from large cities, comply with this formula? There would not be enough doctors in such communities to form the committee mentioned. I think the people who drew up the formula, well motivated as they undoubtedly were, simply did not take into account the facts of life in rural Canada.

These are a few of my thoughts on the matter. I look forward to hearing more of the debate and to coming to grips with some of the great problems of our time as expressed in these clauses. I thank the chamber for its courtesy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romuald Rodrigue (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in Bill No. C-150 are among the most important changes to the criminal legislation ever introduced in this house. A great number of areas are affected thereby and we are asked to pass amendments having to do with more than 120 clauses of the Criminal Code of Canada. A few of the previous speakers pointed out that more important amendments have been brought in before.

Several of them are distinguished members of the Canadian Bar, including the minister himself, and they all are men of merit. As I am not a lawyer, I shall leave it to them to discuss how important were the changes made in the Canadian Criminal Code at one point or another of our history.

In his introductory remarks, the minister said that he respected the personal convictions of all hon. members. I am quite grateful to him for that.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully listened to and reread the speeches and arguments of the previous speakers. They spoke with dignity and tried to pass on to us as much of their knowledge as possible without repudiating their own convictions.

The bill before us contains a great deal of valuable and desirable amendments. However, some provisions are unacceptable, and I can neither approve nor support them. Other important changes and clarifications could have been put in but are not included in the measure.

This proposal, important in view of the number of sections it seeks to amend, contains contentious provisions and I think, in particular, of the one that deals with abortion.

In my opinion, the right to live is a basic human right on which depend all the others