

Bill C-484 and the Challenge to Women's Reproductive Rights: the Federal Conservatives try the Backdoor Approach

In the past few weeks, you may have heard feminists raising the alarm about the Harper Government's latest evil. The federal Conservatives are trying to pass legislation to open the door to the recriminalization of abortion, though they deny this is their intent.

Bill C-484 would change the criminal code so that those who abuse or kill pregnant women will also be charged with harming or killing the fetus. Though it's understandable families who have lost pregnant daughters and sisters to intimate violence want justice, this is not the way to achieve it. This bill will not stop violence against women. But it will threaten our reproductive rights.

In order to be charged with injuring or killing a fetus, the fetus must be granted personhood. From there, it is only a short step to the recriminalization of abortion. Federal Conservatives say women who are pregnant will be exempted from prosecution under this legislation. But why should we believe them? After all, this is a government that has proven it does not support equal rights.

The scary part is that, as of March 5th, this Bill has passed second reading and has gone to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. After that, it goes through one more vote in the House of Commons. If the Yeas outweigh the Nays, the legislation goes through. Once a fetus is given personhood, which follows from this legislation, a woman who chooses to terminate an unwanted pregnancy could theoretically be charged with murder.

We must stop this bill from going through.

For a sample letter to send to federal Members of Parliament, go to:

<http://www.pacsw.ca/docs/letter-billC484.rtf>

Here are the Newfoundland and Labrador MP email addresses. It is worth noting all the Liberal MPs voted against the Bill (except Gerry Byrne, who did not vote at all) and all the Conservative MPs voted for it.

Gerry Byrne (Liberal): Byrne.G@parl.gc.ca
Norm Doyle (Conservative): Doyle.N@parl.gc.ca
Loyola Hearn (Conservative): Hearn.L@parl.gc.ca
Fabian Manning (Conservative): Manning.F@parl.gc.ca
Bill Matthews (Liberal): Matthews.B@parl.gc.ca
Todd Russell (Liberal): Russell.T@parl.gc.ca
Scott Simms (Liberal): Simms.S@parl.gc.ca