

Government Orders

should vary, depending on how provocative she was, for example, if she was wearing a short skirt.

I never subscribed to this point of view. What our colleague is saying, is: "I am ready to accept homosexuality only if these people are treated the same as everybody else and only if we do not acknowledge, at this moment in time, that they are being systematically discriminated against and are being targeted for violence". This is contradictory, this is a paradox, this is illogical and cannot be. That is why we have a bill before us like the one that is before us today.

[English]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for St. Catharines.

• (1910)

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate at third reading of Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code, sentencing, and other acts in consequence thereof. It is a criminal law bill directed at hate motivated crime.

First, I want to commend the work of the Minister of Justice, who has responded to the call of Canadians for the need to reform our sentencing process by establishing a clear framework of provisions to guide the courts in our country.

We have before us a criminal law bill directed at hate motivated crime. We have before us comprehensive legislation that for the very first time gives Canadians a say in the purpose and principles of criminal sentencing.

In these very challenging times, it is now necessary to provide clear guidelines for the courts to protect society to assist in rehabilitating offenders, to promote their sense of responsibility, and to provide reparation for sometimes irreparable damage, both physical and emotional, done to victims and the community.

Rules of evidence and procedure have now been set out in this bill, along with alternative measures to prisons and conditional sentences to be served in the community under strict compliance with conditions ordered by the court.

This bill works in partnership with the community to rehabilitate offenders while at the same time protecting the public from those criminals who have committed serious and violent crimes.

The strength of this bill is clearly evident from the support it has garnered across the country, despite what we might hear in the House.

I represent an urban riding in the greater Toronto area where people want only to live in peace and safety. In Etobicoke—Lake-

shore we are firm believers in crime prevention measures as a method of improving safety in our community. As a community we are working very hard to eliminate crime. I give as an example the hard work of the Etobicoke Crime Prevention Association, which has succeeded in making our community more aware of crime prevention. I would like to read to the House the tip of the month published in its May 1995 newsletter. It reads: "A key element in preventing crime is public education through a variety of means. Let the public know that prevention is possible. They are capable and it is worth their while".

The sentencing reforms contained within Bill C-41 will indeed make the efforts of all Canadian communities worth their while. Our government is committed to restoring safety to our homes, our streets, and our communities. Bill C-41 is a clear indication of this commitment. We want to give Canadians back their sense of security by working hard to implement policies that will reduce and help to prevent crime in Canadian communities.

Canadians have asked for changes to the criminal justice system and we have responded with reforms that enhance the rights of victims and encourage respect for the law.

When we talk about public education we want to make sure that people have all the facts. What has been happening across the way today has not been all the facts.

I will now proceed to give what I perceive to be the clear facts in this legislation and emphasize the benefits these reforms will mean to the protection of all Canadians.

With the passage of this bill judges will henceforth be required to give clear reasons for sentencing in all cases. This clarity will benefit the public and will assist later in potential appeals trials.

The bill also gives consideration to offences committed in breach of trust, usually against children and increasingly in cases of violence against women. These vulnerable individuals who lost this essential and assumed protection in society will now find it in the courts.

This legislation will also benefit and consider the victims of crime, whose suffering and anxieties for so long have been pushed aside.

• (1915)

The statement of purpose and principles will allow for reparation to the victim or the community while at the same time forcing the offenders to take responsibility for their actions.

This means first of all that financial restitution can now be audited to compensate for loss of property or damage inflicted on an individual. I know that many seniors in my community who have been victimized by theft will be very pleased with the introduction of this provision.