

Government Orders

However, the fact is that the justice minister, cheered on by the Prime Minister, had an agenda and just tried to ram this thing through and God help anyone in this party who votes against it, because they are going to answer to the whip over the summer.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I hear Reform members call the bill frivolous and say we are giving people with a different sexual orientation unnecessary powers when there is already flexibility, I say yes, judges have some flexibility, but they are under no obligation to consider the sexual orientation, race or gender of the victim. This flexibility applies to all human beings. There is no obligation.

In Quebec, we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we have been using it for 17 years. We never had a problem. People never said we were giving more power to some people on the basis of their sexual orientation, race or gender. On the contrary. I believe this is a very democratic exercise.

Reform members today are trying to appear holier than thou. Today they are calling for the death sentence, and maybe tomorrow they will call for corporal punishment for children to make them more obedient. I think this bill is nothing out of the ordinary. It is a good bill. I think it should be supported, and we will do that. In Quebec, we have operated this way for a long time.

• (2105)

I would ask Reform members to stop playing holier than thou in this House. I would ask them to be logical and look at the bill as it is, and especially to read it, because they did not read it. I have a feeling they do not understand it very well. Maybe we should translate it for them. I would also ask them to try to understand and further the cause of democracy.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of talk there.

I want to address the first thing the member said. She said that the judges do not have an obligation. Judges are put in a position to preside over criminal cases. They are in fact entrusted with the responsibility and with the obligation to deal in the sentencing of people who are found guilty of committing crimes in this country. They do have the obligation. They clearly have an obligation. The problem is when we get politicians who do not allow them to do their job and want to try to influence them for politically correct reasons or for politically expedient reasons. They interfere with the justice system.

If judges were left alone to do their job without the outside influence from politicians and political parties who believe that

people who commit crimes should not be convicted, we would have a safer society.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief.

I have to say that I do not think this debate is good for the Canadian public. This is the highest court in the land. Quite frankly, I am fed up with members of the Reform Party getting up and either intentionally or unintentionally in their debates on their points—they have every right to debate points here, but it seems that each and every time they use an example about what is wrong they use the example of a native Canadian, an Indian, as he just said, to show that the whole sentencing structure in Canada is wrong.

Did he use the example of an adult white male from Alberta? No. He used the example of a native. It is the same thing when there is a crisis in the fisheries on the west coast: they get up and talk about native poaching.

Every single thing I have heard from this bunch opposite since they got elected smacks of racism. It smacks of the very type of thing I fought most of my adult life to stamp out. To hear it repeated over and over again in the highest court in the land I think is condemnable.

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, I do not know, was that a question?

I would like to make a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This hon. member appears to be under the understanding that I created this story. I did not. It happened. I read it in the newspaper. I read the report. I did not create the idea that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Dartmouth very clearly called the other member stupid. I do not think it contributes to the demeanour of this House one bit to have one member calling another in a loud voice stupid.

There are very few of us who were in the last Parliament here, and I can assure colleagues that the Canadian people thought we behaved abominably in the last Parliament.

I would ask the hon. member for Dartmouth whether he wishes to reconsider that comment.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I was a member in the last Parliament, and I do not often use language that strong. I am sorry, but the member's comments incited me to strong language. If it is the wish of the Chair, I will withdraw it.

I will speak later in this debate and I will clarify my comments so that anybody who is listening will fully understand the intent of what I just said to the hon. member.

The Deputy Speaker: I would thank the hon. member for Dartmouth very much for that. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Wild Rose.