

things better for women in this country it is mandatory gender sensitivity training for judges in the federal area.

The next question was the whole question of reasonableness. That was amended. As my colleague for New Westminster—Burnaby has said, it is not necessarily perfect. It sure is not. It will depend on the judges and how they will interpret this. What it now says is: “No person shall without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed, or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection 2 that causes that other person reasonably” and the amendment adds “in all the circumstances to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them”.

• (1240)

Is “in all the circumstances” sufficient? I do not know. I hope so. The problem is that we are going to have to depend to some degree on judicial discretion but “in all the circumstances” opens the door for the use of expert testimony called on behalf of the victim to talk about the circumstances relating to women.

One of the most common examples that has been used—it shows the utter insanity of stalkers and what they do—is the one ploy of sending flowers. Women have been inundated with roses or inundated with some other form of flowers. What has been in the history of the relationships between people who care for each other a symbol of romance, affection and all of these things becomes a symbol of horror, fear, domination and threat. It is clear that there are people whereby this “in all the circumstances” allows for testimony with regard to that kind of conduct. Is it enough? Again we do not know but we cannot at this stage of the game wait and see.

That is why I would have liked a review. That is why I still think a review is a good thing. However there are other ways that we can do the same thing. The bill obviously is amendable and this is what we are going to have to look at in the future if necessary. We are going to have to see whether or not “reasonable in all the circumstances” solves the problem.

I can say right now that if it does not solve the problem then every one of us here in this House is going to have to answer to the women’s groups who have raised the question. We take in a sense a leap of faith because we want the best legislation we can get.

Government Orders

That in general deals with my concerns about this bill. In conclusion I merely want to say that the women of Canada need the protection of this bill. I hope to God it is enough. I know that many of us have worked hard to get to this point.

I too want to congratulate both the member for Moncton and the member for New Westminster—Burnaby for their private members’ bills. This is one of the most serious problems facing our society today. We have to deal with it. We have to pass this bill. We have to hope that in other jurisdictions the sensitivity to enforcement will do something to ensure that women do not have to live in fear.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I rise once again to speak on Bill C-126 which would introduce for the first time a law to punish criminal harassment or stalking and which also takes legislative measures to prevent child abuse.

I now have a very thick pile of letters about stalking. The letters are mainly from women across Canada who have told me and told other members of this House that they want a stalking law. Some of these letters are from women who have been stalked. Some are from the families of women who have been threatened, incessantly harassed, beaten and terrorized. Terrorism is not too strong a word to use to describe the kind of behaviour that these women have been subject to.

I also have a large file of letters from particularly people from British Columbia who support the child abuse provisions of this bill. I know the parliamentary secretary mentioned earlier Monica Rainey and the organization that she is involved with, Citizens Against Child Exploitation. They have been very influential in raising the awareness of all members of Parliament about the issues behind these portions of the bill that deal with children.

• (1245)

Earlier, the member for Annapolis Valley—Hants talked about the response that he received to a mail out that he had done in his community. My New Democrat colleague, the member for Surrey North, did a mail out to his community in which he received back 2,500 responses on this issue of stalking. As the member for Annapolis Valley—Hants said, they were full responses giving detailed accounts of their own personal experience and saying how strongly they supported at that time my private member’s bill on the issue of stalking. Over