

Government Orders

First, it found that some 20 people had been killed because of their sexual orientation. Moreover, about one hundred of those people who testified before the commission had been victims of physical abuse.

The hon. member is also right when she says that, ultimately, all this takes place in everyday life. As a member of Parliament, I often meet people who are homosexuals and who tell me that they were intimidated.

These cases do not all involved physical abuse or death, but the hon. member is quite right when she says that there is still this widespread idea that you can bash people who are gay, because they may look effeminate, or because they openly show their orientation.

The only reasonable way to change that attitude is to provide some deterrent, through bills such as this one.

Again, as parliamentarians, we should ask ourselves this question, which I direct in particular to our Reform Party friends, through the good offices of the Chair, of course: What is so upsetting about our Canadian society saying that it will not tolerate reprisals against homosexuals, against the expression of one difference, among others?

Mr. Speaker, I think you will agree with me that when a person is comfortable with his or her own identity, with his or her own sexuality, that person will accept the fact that there may be differences. With all due respect, I think that we must question the well-being—and I choose my words carefully—of some members of this House who show no tolerance toward the expression of that difference.

If I were in the shoes of some Reform members, I would ask myself some questions.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin in my comments to the member by simply stating that as an individual person, as a member of Parliament, as a member of the population of Quebec, and as a Canadian, I have more than ample respect for him. I wish him no ill. I honestly do.

I am going to make a statement that is going to sound as though it is very ridiculous. I am going to say—and I am with my friend from Wild Rose on this—that I want to have fat people included in that list. I really do. I could tell members experiences of how when I was a youngster I was attacked and beat up because I was fat. I have been like this all my life. So I want to be on that list. I want to make sure that people cannot attack me because they have this prejudice against fat people.

Of course members are going to say no, that is not necessary. Then I am going to ask why they hate me so and why they are so homophobic. Now I have just said something that everyone in this

House recognizes as being quite a ludicrous statement simply because it is not based on fact.

Number one, yes, I did get beat up. That does not mean that my being beat up was any more important than another kid who was beat up because he had an even funnier face than mine.

• (1905)

I remember another time being quite vilified because I was a farm kid and I attended a city school. We have differences, and sometimes kids can be cruel. That does not mean that we now have to start specifying this person, this group; that person, that group. What we need to do in order to reduce those differences is to start treating everyone the same.

When I say to my hon. colleague opposite that I have respect for him as an individual, I certainly have no intention of checking out what he does after he leaves this place. That is his choice. I neither fear him nor do I wish him any harm. However, I want to say that not one member of the Reform Party in the country will say that because of the choice he made he is now fair game for being beaten up. I am totally opposed to that. When I hear of individuals being beaten up because they are homosexuals I decry that as loudly and as vigorously as I would when anyone else is beaten up, for whatever reason.

It is time that we as Canadians started applying the rules of justice and the protection of law equally to everyone across the board. I want to assure the hon. member that I do not dislike him. I am not picking on him. I am simply saying that he stands together with all of us on an equal ground.

[Translation]

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my colleague that among all of my Reform colleagues, he is by far my favourite. However, I do not know whether I should be jumping for joy or crying after what he just said because, with all due respect, my colleague rose in this House and said: "I do not dislike the hon. member", all the better. However, he also said: "What we need to do is to start treating everyone the same".

You will understand that at face value, such a statement betrays a lack of sensitivity, because, if we acknowledge that in Canadian and Quebec society people are being molested solely on the basis of their sexual orientation, there is no way we can agree with our colleague's conclusion that we have to treat everyone the same.

This is like the kind of reasoning that used to be widespread a few years back, and I am choosing my words carefully. You will nonetheless understand to what point this example, regardless of how absurd it was, is worth calling to mind. I remember very clearly the debate that was raging in our society a few years back in which some people used to say: "Whenever a person, in general a woman, is raped, we must take into consideration whether she provoked the attack". And they said, some very sensible people included, even men of law, that the punishment for raping a woman