

*Supply*

Where there is a victim there is usually crime, violence, or at the least a socially unacceptable act. People can also be victims of unfair policies, stifling economic situations, unattainable job markets.

Societal values and our attitude towards the way people treat each other are changing. Today's definition of "victim" therefore differs considerably from what it was, say, fifty years ago.

I shall speak particularly of women as victims, since women are my primary concern, given my portfolio as status of women critic.

This morning I leafed through a most interesting book, the *Traité des problèmes sociaux*. This treatise, published under the direction of a number of eminent Quebec academics, covers a multitude of topics related to our society. Looking through the table of contents, I was struck by the innumerable types of victims there can be within a society.

Among the subjects covered were: occupational diseases, mental illness, alcoholism and other addictions, STDs and AIDS, crime, prostitution, pornography, poverty, unemployment, racism, homelessness—and these are but a few of the topics in the *Traité des problèmes sociaux*.

You can see then, and this is what I wanted to talk about, the unbelievable number of social and personal situations that can "create" victims, if we can use that verb here.

Of course, women are not the only victims of poverty, unemployment, racism. They are, however, most often the victims of domestic violence, prostitution and pornography. The victims of certain problems are almost always women, because of their gender, along with children.

Moreover, problems related to unemployment, illiteracy and poverty affect women differently, because of their family responsibilities and society's perception of their role within it.

Even governments are not immune to prejudice. We need only think of this government trying to calculate benefits paid to women based on family income. This is the best example of the victimization of women because of their role within the family.

As for the notion of victim, Denise Lemieux traces its evolution, in the context of spousal abuse. She writes, in the above-mentioned text: "What stands out, if you look at this over several centuries, is the major attitudinal and legislative change regarding wife beating. Tolerated in the seventeenth century, sometimes even glorified by the popular culture of the time as a manly thing, and by the law and the religion of the time as a paternalistic punishment for the wife, children and servants, violent behaviour gradually became a reprehensible thing, as principles of democratic government began to spread".

Principles of democratic government. So, there seems to be a connection between the principles of government and the concept of victim. This is interesting. One such principle, affirmed by the Canadian and Quebec charters, provides that men and women have equal rights.

• (1630)

When equality is denied, whether because a man beats his wife, or because a government pays smaller benefits to a woman than to a man, that woman becomes a victim. When a government tolerates the fact that members of its army organize parties to celebrate the killing of 14 young women, all women become victims.

So, the concept of victim is related to a certain vision of society. Everywhere, our governments have officially proclaimed a vision of society in which women have the same rights as men. We will have to recognize that women are victims whenever equality is not respected, whether in the family home, or in the policies and practices of the government.

Those in power will also have to concentrate their energies on eliminating the inequalities between men and women. Our aim is to have fewer and fewer victims or none at all.

Until then, our efforts must go to re-establishing a balance between victims and those responsible for situations creating victims, at whatever level.

Let us go for openmindedness, and let us make sure, as leaders, that we provide our young people with positive role models. Let us work to provide women with equal opportunities in all settings. Let us eliminate social, economic and political inequality between men and women. Let us make men understand that discriminatory behaviour is completely unacceptable—at work, at home, in associations, in the courts of justice and in government offices.

Let us put our fine words into practice. This is surely one way to ensure victims' fundamental and democratic right to equality and quality of life without violence.

[English]

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak on this issue. I am certainly pleased that the warm and fuzzy questions asked by the Liberals to the warm and fuzzy Bloc members regarding law and order are over with. That was difficult to take.

I would like to quote a few statistics I have picked up with regard to what the hon. member from the Liberal Party stated a while ago. I am going back to 1984. The rate of violent crime since 1984 has increased 49 per cent. The rate of sexual assault has increased 8 per cent annually since 1984. Assaults accounted for six out of ten reported violent incidents in 1994.