

Government Orders

Whenever this happens, we will take deterrent measures. To deter people from doing this, the lawmakers must demand that the courts impose much more severe sanctions against those who do promote repression. Do you have to be a genius to understand that? Is this beyond comprehension? Does one need a Ph.D. to understand this kind of thing? I do not think so, but it takes two things some members of this House may lack. The first is an open mind, a simple and solid openness to difference. Unfortunately, this is too much to ask of some parliamentarians.

The second is tolerance, tolerance permitting the understanding that there are people, who—for all sorts of reasons, something innate or something in their personality—nevertheless differ in the way they experience their sexuality. We are asking parliamentarians, who are legislators and who must set the tone, to be open to this. Unfortunately, it is asking too much of certain colleagues, and, I imagine, that they would have to justify their position to their electors.

• (1855)

I said earlier that I thought there was an openmindedness in Quebec that is not always found elsewhere. If I had to explain it, I would say there are two reasons for it. The first is that, on the whole, as a society, we condemn violence. I think that, on the whole, as a society in Quebec, we recognize that there are gays and that they continue to be victims of violence. There is no attempt to beat about the bush or to hide behind this reality, which means acknowledging the facts.

Why then can Quebec claim, take pride in, a certain openmindedness not to be found throughout English Canada, although I know very well that parts of the country are very open to this. The reasons are twofold. The first is that members from Quebec, in dealing with this issue, do not ask their electors to take a moral stand. When Quebecers deal with these questions, they see that violence is committed against members of a certain group, known among other things as gays, they take a stand on rights. They take a civic stand.

They do not ask a majority or a minority to impose morals. As you know, the foul-ups that occurred during debate on this issue in this House came from members who, in my opinion, rose in this House to talk about moral values, as though there was only one set of universal moral values that must be instilled in everyone.

We as parliamentarians know, from travelling a little here and abroad, reading a little, watching television and taking the trouble of talking with people, that there is no single set of moral values, no single religion. There are numerous sets of moral and ethical values guiding individuals. This is a good thing, and not only in Quebec and Canada.

If we as parliamentarians want to successfully navigate this debate without questioning anyone's motives and with a minimum of good faith, we must stay away from moral judgments. We must restrict ourselves to legal matters, because our first duty is to make laws, to legislate. Mr. Speaker, since you are indicating to me that my time is up, I will conclude by asking all members to make a highly democratic and tolerant gesture by supporting this government and the Minister of Justice, whose courage I commend, and voting unanimously in favour of Bill C-41.

[English]

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for very clearly stating that we are not debating morality in the House. We are debating criminal law and how we want our sentencing bills to be now and for the future.

He has clearly expressed the views that have been a consensus across the country. It is not just the gay, lesbian and bisexual groups that are in favour of this legislation. It is the United Church of Canada, B'nai Brith, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations and the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

I know the member is from Quebec so I will rely on some of the material that has been forwarded by Quebec. I specifically rely on the Quebec human rights commission, November 1993, which convened the first public inquiry into discrimination on violence against gays and lesbians. The hearings received a fair profile in that province and across the country. They acquired that profile because 15 homosexual men in Montreal between 1989 and 1993 were murdered. That was the trigger which started the debate in that province.

Other debates went on in Vancouver, Toronto and across the country with the police forces.

• (1900)

We have the Ottawa police chief saying he is in favour of this legislation, we have the metropolitan police force. We need this legislation everywhere. What I want to know from this member is what other experiences does he know about that go on every day in the lives of gays and lesbians for the hate motivated section of this bill to be necessary for all of Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question and, more importantly, for actively supporting this bill. I know that she sits on the committee which reviewed this legislation. The hon. member very appropriately mentioned that, two years ago, the Quebec government appointed, through the Quebec human rights commission, a travelling commission of inquiry which came to the following conclusions.