

Non-Smokers' Health Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the Hon. Member for Calgary South a minute in which to complete her speech.

Mrs. Sparrow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, in conclusion, while it is clear that tobacco smoke can be a serious source of annoyance and physical discomfort to non-smokers, as well as a health hazard to some, the legislation of the kind proposed in Bill C-204 is premature. Self-regulation and voluntary imposition of restrictions have so far proved to be an effective means of accommodating both smokers and non-smokers. Legislation would probably diminish the atmosphere of mutual respect within which these initiatives are now being adopted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. John Parry (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with some pleasure in taking the opportunity of addressing the very important motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald), but also with great sorrow that there is even the necessity to debate in the Chamber measures aimed at eliminating a murderous and totally irresponsible habit that claims the lives of some 35,000 to 40,000 Canadians yearly.

I was amazed at the speech delivered by the Hon. Member for Calgary South (Mrs. Sparrow). I could not believe my ears. Had the rules permitted the opportunity to ask questions of that Hon. Member I would have asked if she had composed the speech she read. If she had I would be doubly horrified. If it was simply a pre-packaged speech that the Government Members' services bureau provides for its acolytes, then I have to say that those who put it together literally exhibited—and I am fully conscious of the pun—a breath-taking degree of irresponsibility in regard to this particular question.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry) has imputed motives to the Hon. Member for Calgary South (Mrs. Sparrow). She is quite capable of writing her own speeches. There is no sense or reason for the Hon. Member to impute motives, to the effect that someone else wrote her speech. I think he should withdraw his imputation.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Perhaps the speaker from the New Democratic Party who has the floor was imputing a motive; but perhaps he was doing it inadvertently. The Chair might want to give him the opportunity to retract his statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have listened to the representations of the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) and the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall). I am not convinced beyond a doubt that the Hon. Member was in fact imputing motives. Therefore, the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry) has the floor.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I was about to rise on the same point of order. With Your Honour's permission I would like to respond to it before returning to debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am willing to allow the Hon. Member to respond to the point of order before resuming his speech, but I have made a ruling. According to the Chair the Hon. Member was not imputing motives. However, the Hon. Member may well want to comment on my decision. I would certainly be willing to allow him to do that.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Speaker, in deference to your ruling, I will simply continue with my speech and say, as I was saying before I was interrupted, that in my opinion the grouping of the legislative measures that is countenanced by this Bill is a sensible one, and I think a good first step in the ultimate objective which must, of course, be the elimination of the use of tobacco products from the Canadian scene.

The Bill looks at directing the federal Government to ban completely the promotion and advertisement of cigarettes. It guarantees workers under federal jurisdiction the right to a smoke-free environment. It provides Canadians travelling on common carriers the right to do so without breathing cigarette smoke.

Two of the speeches made this afternoon with respect to the Bill were obviously opposed to the spirit of it. I would like to comment briefly on those two speeches.

The Hon. Member for Lévis (Mr. Fontaine) referred to this measure in the context of ensuring a smoke-free environment in the federal workplace as an intervention. So it is. Let us face it, by our very presence in this House we are intervenors individually and collectively. We have no other purpose in this House but to intervene in order to ensure that that which we as legislators desire takes place. I would say that is on the same level as accusing a midwife or a gynaecologist of intervening in a birth. It is on the same level as accusing a policeman who prevents a crime of intervening in the commission of a crime. So much for interventions!

What we are looking for here is legislation aimed at saving lives. Frankly, I was amazed to hear the words of the Hon. Member for Calgary South, whom I understand, and I hope she will correct me if I am wrong, was at one time a nurse. She must have been spared the horror of seeing people die in agony, wracked by cancer, if she could make the remarks she made. I must also say that for her to express such a disdain for legislation fundamentally denies the very purpose for which she was elected to serve the riding of Calgary South. What do we come here for if not to legislate?

I have to thank very much my friend, the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Reimer), for his intelligent and well-argued intervention in favour of the Bill. I believe it takes courage for a Member whose riding is so close to a tobacco-growing area to stand in the House and so firmly nail his flag to the mast of health protection and health promotion, as he did.