

*Government Orders*

asking people to indicate their support. Much to my surprise I received 2,500 letters supporting that private member's bill. That is much greater than any other type of mail-back I have received in my nearly five years in the House. I can understand why, as it is a problem women in particular have faced for years.

I have worked in family courts. I have worked in social services. I have known many women who have been criminally harassed and stalked. Within my extended family we have a young woman who was harassed, stalked or followed. She actually moved from one city to another and still was seriously assaulted because the stalker appeared to be immune.

I had the privilege of sitting in on the committee hearings for a couple of days. I heard women give evidence about their problems. Their lives were not only terrorized but were put in total disarray by somebody repeatedly phoning them. Even after changing their phone numbers it took only two days for the men to get the new phone numbers.

Men contacted their family physicians and actually got information. These men contacted their relatives and employers. Whenever the women went out of their houses to their places of employment the men were there. Clearly these men were interested in controlling the women. They put the women's lives in turmoil. They wanted to control and exercise power over them. It was not always that they exercised it in terms of threats. They often veiled their power by saying that they wanted to help them, that they wanted to be with them and that they loved them.

During committee consideration it became obvious there was a need for this type of legislation. The committee worked hard and made many improvements. There are some things I regret the committee refused to address.

I want to mention just one or two of them. One was that there should have been a minimum sentence for repeat offenders or people who continued to harass where there was a court order or a restraining order prohibiting them from doing so. To not have a minimum sentence makes it a mockery. Another area I would like to have seen dealt with is the matter of education.

• (1520)

Does the member for New Westminster—Burnaby feel there will be another opportunity in the near future to bring back the legislation to deal with two major flaws? One is the minimum sentence and the other is the education of police, the judiciary and judges.

**Ms. Black:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Surrey North for his support when I was drafting my private members' bill and his support for the legislation within my own caucus and outside in his community.

Without the understanding of both men and women as parliamentarians and both men and women in society about the real tragedy of this kind of harassment and terrorism, I do not think we can make the progress we need to make.

He talked about two provisions that I also feel very strongly about. The matter of education of the police officials, Crown prosecutors and the judges is something I and others have certainly been talking about in this place for close to the five years we have been here. We have been pushing for mandatory gender sensitivity education. Over and over again we see inappropriate, ill-informed and sexist comments from the top, from the judges, in terms of the reality of women's lives and experiences. I do not believe it will change until we make a concerted effort in that area.

In Australia it has been done. The former Minister of Justice who is now running to be leader of the Conservative Party has said in the House it is impossible to do so, that we have to respect the integrity of the judges. That is nonsense. It has been done in Australia. It can be done. It needs to be done.

On the issue of penalties within this bill I feel disappointed because in talking to people within the court system and women themselves, they have told me of cases over and over again where a man has been served with a restraining order and right there in the court room in front of the officials, the judges, the Crown prosecutors and the lawyers, he takes the restraining order and says: "This is not worth the paper it is printed on and I am going to get you". Unfortunately he is right. It is not worth the paper it is printed on under our current system. I wish we had minimum penalties in