

Private Members' Business

together, why should they not be treated with respect and fairness in our laws? This is what the debate is all about. This is the issue that we will vote on in a few minutes.

I did not hear many Liberal Party members speak in favour of this motion. Am I to understand that they support the views expressed by the member for Central Nova?

• (1135)

I am putting the question to them. There are a few minutes left and I would appreciate an answer. This is a fundamental debate on human rights. These days, and this is particularly true of Liberal Party members, many are trying to champion individual freedoms in Quebec. I would like to hear some Liberal members address the issue today.

It should also be pointed out that values evolve with time. Let me quote the member for Central Nova. She made these comments in this House, during the debate on this motion. I could not believe what I was hearing. On June 1, 1995, the member said, in reference to the motion tabled by the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve: "All these demands are encroaching on and undermining the inherent and inviolable rights of families. Families have existed before the church. Families have existed before the state. Parliament has absolutely no legal or constitutional authority to redefine family, or to enter into the realm of the sanctity of marriage". Given the reasoning of the member for Central Nova, there would never have been a Parliament, since Parliament is there to pass legislation and grant rights to the population.

Again, since Parliament necessarily came after families and after the church, it would never have existed, based on the member's reasoning. As we all know, and as the member for Chicoutimi pointed out just a few moments ago, values change over time. Thirty or forty years ago, there was no recognition of common law spouses. Divorced people were pointed at, perceived within their communities as abnormal, as needing to be watched and reported on. Unwed mothers had to hide away, give birth to their babies in institutions and then give them up. All that barely 30 or 40 years ago. That is how it was in Quebec and I imagine it was the same everywhere in Canada.

The disabled were seen as invalids who generally had to be institutionalized. Seventy-five years ago, Canadian women did not have the right to vote. Fifty years ago that was the situation in Quebec. There was slavery in the United States 150 years ago. Four hundred years ago Galileo was imprisoned for saying that the earth was round. Human kind has evolved since it first appeared on this planet. I trust that this process will continue and that the example of the member for Central Nova will be nothing more than one unfortunate anecdote in the history of humanity.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I remind the House the question will be put at 11.45 a.m. We entered this debate at 11.03 a.m. with 42 minutes of maximum debate time. I want to forewarn the House.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to Motion No. 264 I will focus my discussion on three of the concerns I have relating to this motion: the opposition Canadians appear to hold in recognizing same sex relationships; the extremely limited number of people such drastic changes would benefit; the excessive cost both in time and money resulting from the passage and implementation of Motion No. 264.

Much of the debate over this motion has centred around the various financial and legal benefits currently available only to opposite sex couples. The reasoning behind these benefits lies in the desire of all levels of government to protect and preserve the two parent nuclear family.

From biblical times to the present day, the traditional family has been viewed as an ideal family structure. As well, it is the building block of the extended family, the cornerstone of contemporary Canadian life.

The dozens of programs directed toward traditional couples and families have been brought in over many years after careful study and discussion.

• (1140)

Support of the traditional family remains widespread today. According to a recent Angus Reid poll, 68 per cent of all Canadians believe the traditional two parent family is the very best family model in which to raise children. If we talk to educators and counsellors across the country they will tell us that on average the most well adjusted, well behaved children are those who come from the traditional ideal family model consisting of a father, a mother and children.

The sorts of radical changes advocated by the motion do nothing whatsoever to enhance the nuclear family. Rather, they remove the distinctiveness and uniqueness, reducing the traditional family structure from the ideal choice to simply one choice among a range of options. I refuse to stand by and let this happen.

It appears this opinion is shared by the vast majority of Canadians. Again according to a recent Angus Reid poll, a poll conducted for the international year of the family, a solid 60 per cent of Canadians rejected the idea of benefits for same sex couples and 85 per cent objected to paying higher taxes to fund benefits for same sex couples.

As well, a recent constituency poll showed me that 77 per cent of the people in my riding oppose the official sanctioning of same sex couples in the manner the hon. member is advocating. The people of Cariboo—Chilcotin and the people of Canada have spoken out on the motion. They are not saying no to the principle of personal choice and they are not saying no to