

Adjournment Debate

the current provisions of the Criminal Code. The Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) has promised an amendment. That was supposed to be introduced last spring before we left for the summer, but it has been delayed until the next session of Parliament.

There is another difficulty with enforcement, Mr. Speaker. Individuals and organizations have made complaints but police response has not been vigorous. The courts still do not understand the problem of pornography, especially the violent aspects of it. Recent decisions have included paltry fines, even in such flagrant case as Red Hot Video in British Columbia.

For broadcasting, there are particular difficulties in enforcement. What do you do if you do not have expensive recording machinery? With print pornography there is a magazine that you can take to the police with your complaint; otherwise, you do not have anything. A tape may be available or it may not. In the case of satellite broadcasting of pornography we cannot even have tapes and that means that redress is extremely limited.

[Translation]

Pornography is a serious problem. The rate of violence against Canadian women is too high and the situation is growing worse. We now have proof that a link exists between violence on the screens and violence in real life. Social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists have been telling us about child abuse cases, and they are becoming increasingly serious. Battered women tell us that their aggressors forced them to imitate pornographic acts. And what does the Federal Government do? The Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) has faith in the CRTC, but the CRTC does not do anything. The Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) has proposed an amendment to the Criminal Code, an amendment which I support indeed, but the Minister is quite prepared to wait until the new session of Parliament to introduce it in the House. No hurry, even though the problem is serious.

What can we do now? Tomorrow, we can take one step. Tomorrow, my Private Member's Bill will come up for debate on second reading, which means we will be debating the principle. My Private Member's Bill, C-675, features a simple amendment to the Broadcasting Act. I propose adding a single sentence to prohibit abusive comment or pictorial representation on any race, religion, creed or sex. The first three criteria are already covered in CRTC regulations, but the fourth—sex—is not. Abuse against ethnic minorities and religious groups is illegal, but abuse against women is legal. Antisemitism and racism are prohibited, but sexism is acceptable. If the CRTC has refused to bring forth an appropriate amendment to the regulations, then it is up to Parliament to amend the legislation, the Broadcasting Act, and to abolish all forms of abuse on public airwaves.

● (1805)

[English]

The Minister of Communications can show his concern about the pornography issue concretely tomorrow by supporting my Private Members' Bill to amend the Broadcasting Act, and I call upon him to do so. Indeed, I am hoping to get all party support for this Private Members' Bill. It is only a small step but an important one. It would say to the broadcasting world that abuse is not acceptable. With other measures, it could help to stop pornography and help turn the tide. It would give Canadian women some confidence that this Parliament takes the problem of violence against women and children seriously.

[Translation]

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette (Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer this timely question on pornography which has been a subject of growing controversy since early this year as a result of the campaign launched primarily by residents of the Ottawa region and the advent of Pay TV.

[English]

Since then the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, on June 23, to reflect growing concern about cruel, violent or degrading portrayal of individuals in the media. This proposal removes the current need for linking crime or cruelty, violence or degradation with sex in order for the undue exploitation of these matters to be obscene. Video tapes and broadcast material are clearly included in this clause, so this is step number one.

The second step is that we have to state clearly that the CRTC also has to go by the general standard and that child pornography and violent pornography has never been permitted. This Government has set up a task force made up of experts in the field of pornography, that is to say composed of deans of law faculties and various experts in the social sciences. This committee has already started its work this summer, and it is working very closely with all those concerned with this important problem.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that even though we feel this particular subject is of the utmost importance, if we were to take the wrong measures in order to protect women we might create more harm to those we want to protect.

I have been standing very stongly with the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) on this particular issue, but I would like to reassure our citizens that this Government is firmly committed to taking the necessary action, but also in line with the new Constitution of this country under which freedom of expression also has to meet the standards generally accepted by this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are quite aware of the problem. This task force will certainly give us more indication as to what steps we should take and we are necessarily going to work very closely with the Hon. Member to study her Bill tomorrow. But I would like to point out that pornography is certainly a