

The Constitution

Catholic priests in Ottawa, the British Columbia Public Interest Advocacy Centre and many others.

I know that at the most recent constitutional conference in Toronto there was strong support for the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Canada clause and a number of workshops adopted that proposal unanimously.

The B.C. Council of Churches has urged the government and the committee to move forward on this.

The group, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, submitted a very eloquent brief to the parliamentary committee in which they pointed out that social permission that already exists in our society to regard homosexuality in a derogatory light is further reinforced by the silence of the Canada clause on sexual orientation.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays point out that we are excluding their children and all the other homosexuals who make up about 10 per cent of the population.

One of the more eloquent letters that I received came from a woman in Halifax, Nova Scotia who wrote to the committee and said:

It has come to my attention that I have been left out of the draft Canada clause. My families, on both sides, have resided in Canada for seven generations, but this clause, proposed in order "to affirm the identity and aspirations of the people of Canada" has ignored me—I hope the committee will reconsider the Canada clause and add sexual orientation to the list.

After seven generations of roots in Canada, and my own life of contribution to the country, please don't leave me out just because my life partner is a woman. Our love for each other harms no one, and should not be the basis for exclusion from our country's citizenship.

At this critical time in our nation's history, when we are seeking to bring in as many Canadians as possible, I would hope that the committee would recognize it is important, indeed essential, that we include those Canadians who happen to be lesbian, gay or bisexual as well in this statement which reflects all of Canada.

• (1850)

I say this at a time when there is too much hatred, too much violence directed at lesbians and gay men. As the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays have pointed out, the most hateful lie of all is the lie that somehow deals with homosexuals as being child abusers. It is a lie,

a despicable lie which has been broadcast by a member of this House, the hon. member for Scarborough West, in a letter that he sent to all members of this House, an example of hate literature in which he urges members of the House not to include sexual orientation either in the Constitution or in the human rights code because he said this will lead to the recognition of paedophilia.

I would hope that his colleagues in the Liberal caucus and indeed the leader of the Liberal Party would speak out and make it clear that this man does not speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party and that he will be removed from any responsible position within that caucus.

In closing, I want to pay tribute to the men and women from across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, who have written to the parliamentary committee urging it and the government to recognize that we as lesbians, gay men and bisexuals will not be excluded from the Constitution. We urge the government and the committee to ensure that the Canada clause does in fact include sexual orientation.

I have the honour of tabling, pursuant to the provisions of the Standing Order, a number of briefs and letters which have been submitted to both me and the committee urging the committee to ensure that this injustice is remedied.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Allan Koury (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak this evening during the special debate on the Constitution, to inform hon. members of the views of my constituents in Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

"Shaping Canada's Future Together". We tend to see the government as a static institution, as a machine that was built and put into service a long time ago. Our democratic system exists thanks to its citizens and, like them, keeps growing and developing.

Today's Canada is not like the Canada of 1867, any more than its constituent legislation, which has been amended many times by the citizens of this country. The way we govern ourselves depends on how the courts interpret the Constitution, on our customs and on agreements between provincial legislatures and the fed-