

Adjournment Debate

In today's society, same sex spouses can use section 15 of the charter of rights and freedoms to put a stop to any discrimination against them. I believe that the latest decision made by the Supreme Court in this area, the Egan decision, recognized that fact. It indicated that discrimination based on sexual orientation is similar to all the other types of discrimination mentioned in section 15 of the charter.

• (1830)

Now, could any breach of the charter be justified? I do not think so. As you know, pursuant to some provisions in the charter, under some circumstances, some types of discrimination can be accepted, but I do not think it would apply to homosexuals, because we do not see how it could be justified.

Why could discrimination based on religion, race, colour or age be prohibited, but discrimination based on sexual orientation allowed, when homosexuality has not been illegal in Canada since 1968? Of course, there is some opposition to this motion, as we heard from some of the previous speakers, but I think some members are mixing everything up and are raising issues which have nothing to do with the motion put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

They talk about family and marriage. In the motion before the House, we are not trying to redefine family or marriage. We are only trying to put a stop to the discrimination against same sex spouses in Canada. My colleague is not asking Parliament to recognize that two individuals of the same sex who live as a couple constitute a family. He is not asking Parliament to decide if they are married or not. This issue may be debated at another time, but the object of today's motion is only to recognize that two homosexuals having a stable relationship can enjoy the same benefits the Canadian government and Canadian legislation give to legally married spouses or common law partners.

While listening to the previous speakers, I realized that the arguments they used must be the same arguments that came up during the debates over the Divorce Act or other bills granting benefits to common law spouses. They would have said that we are attacking the family and the whole concept of marriage, but that is not the case.

Obviously, the legislation concerning divorce in Canada and giving some benefits to common law spouses have in no way undermined the concept of family in Canada. I see that my time is up. I hope I will be able to complete my speech during the third hour of debate on this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. member for Jonquière is absolutely right. Next time the motion tabled by the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve is called, he will have the opportunity to complete his remarks in the third hour of debate.

The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of the amendments to the clean water act recently passed by the United States house of representatives and in light of a recent study identifying Canadian and American sources of dioxins, furans and hexachlorobenzenes which are making their way into the Great Lakes, on May 19 I asked the Minister of the Environment what action is being taken to ensure water quality of the Great Lakes.

The study I am referring to is by Dr. Barry Commoner, at the Centre for the Biology of Natural Systems in Flushing, New York. He warns about dioxins and dioxin like compounds because they are highly toxic chemicals produced by industrial processes and waste incineration.

These processes have been linked with cancer and are believed to interfere with the reproductive capacities of many species. Scientists warn also that dioxins contribute to the rising levels of breast and testicular cancer and declining sperm counts in humans.

From the report we learned that the vast majority of the dioxin deposited in the Great Lakes originates in the United States. We also learned incineration of medical waste accounts for 51 per cent of all airborne dioxin entering the lakes. Municipal waste incinerators account for some 24 per cent and cement kilns burning hazardous waste account for 4.9 per cent.

Research into dioxin exposure in Canada by researchers at Boston University's School of Public Health suggests there is no safe limit of exposure to these toxic chemicals.

In light of Dr. Commoner's findings and recommendations from the international joint commission in its fifth biennial report on Great Lakes water quality urging action to stop the inflow of persistent toxic substances into the Great Lakes, I ask the minister's parliamentary secretary whether he can inform the House what the Government of Canada intends to do with respect to this very serious matter. Does the government intend to negotiate a reduction of dioxin emissions in the U.S. under the Canada-U.S. air quality accord?