

subject matter of the inquiry might be referred to a committee, where we could hear evidence from other members of our society as to their views on the dimensions of this issue.

In the meantime I am not launching a movement or a mission. I am hoping to provide a forum for the examination of an issue that appears to be serious and yet continues to be avoided and even brushed away by trivial explanations and accusations of hysteria against anyone who suggests that the issue is more serious than that.

If the matter is pursued in committee, I hope our debate in the Senate will help define the mandate. For example, one of the many questions arising out of the December event is gun control. That, however, seems to me to be a subsidiary question to the central one of violence against women in our society. Some of you may not agree, but that is one of the salutary values of a Senate inquiry. I am anticipating an illuminating and informative debate on this subject.

Let me close this stage of my intervention—because I hope I will have the opportunity to participate later—by quoting Professor Ursula Franklin, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, University of Toronto. The occasion was a Memorial Service at Convocation Hall, University of Toronto, on January 17, 1990, for the 14 women murdered on December 6, 1989, at Ecole Polytechnique, Université de Montréal. At that time she said:

The events in Montreal certainly and surely upset all of us deeply. As somebody who has taught for the last two decades in the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering and who has tried to encourage young women to enter our profession, as someone who is a pacifist and a feminist, the events of Montreal deeply, deeply trouble me. They trouble me because any of these young women could have been one of my students, could have been someone I encouraged by saying: "Look, you can do it. It's a tough turf all right, but there are others. Nothing will change if we aren't there."

But these fourteen women are not there anymore. And many say that what happened to them was an act of a madman, something more or less like a random printing error that had nothing to do with anything except with the state of Marc Lepine's mind. And I'm one of those who says, yes, it was an act of a madman, but it is not unrelated to what is going on around us. That people get mad may happen in any society, any place, every place. But how people get mad, how that escalation from prejudice to hate to violence occurs, what and who is hated, how it is expressed, is not unrelated to the world around us.

When a madman uses easily-available weapons and easily-available prejudices, it is not totally his problem that will go away when he goes away. At another time, it could have been Jews who were lined up, it could have been black people, but in Montreal they were women, and they were women in an engineering faculty. Killed by somebody who wanted to be an engineer.

This is a service of remember and reflection, and we may wish to ask ourselves: Who is it we remember, what is it we are called upon to reflect? We remember the fourteen students in Montreal. But we also remember that they were abandoned. Our memory should not block out the fact that Marc Lepine, at one of his killing stations, went into a classroom in which there were men and women. He asked them to separate into two groups, and when this didn't happen, he fired a shot to the ceiling. Then it did happen. Then the men left. Fourteen women were killed, and Marc Lepine could leave this classroom; and it is not as much a question of how he got in, but it is a question of how he got out. And in our memory and our reflection, we have to include the fact that these women were abandoned by their fellow students. And we have to face it.

Those among us who are men and those among us who are women have to ask, what does it take to make solidarity real? Is one shot to the ceiling or its verbal equivalent enough to abandon the victims? We may wish to reflect together or you may wish to reflect alone, and think what you would have done, maybe even what you are doing in less lethal situations. Is a joke enough to condone harassment? There's a lot to be reflected upon.

Many of the comments after the massacre were comments on what was called a "senseless killing." Are there killings that are not senseless? Are there senseless killings? Are there people who can be abandoned? One may wish to reflect. And if the reflection shows that all killing is senseless, we may ask: Why then do we have tools of killing around if we agree that all killing is senseless? We may wish for a second to reflect how we, as a community, would have felt if the identical massacre had taken place in a bank, in a post office. Maybe, heaven forbid, in a hotel where the young women were prostitutes. How would we react?

We speak on occasion with fair ease about all of us being brothers and sisters. And maybe finally I would urge you, in memory of these our young colleagues, to reflect on what it means that someone is your sister, that someone is a member of that human family. That doesn't mean you have to like them or love them, but it does mean that you and we have to respect their presence as the right to be there on their own terms, not by gracious permission of the dominant culture, not only as they keep their mouths shut and go through the prescribed hoops; but because we are members of one family, by their inalienable right to be and to fulfill their potential.

And if the grief that we feel, the remembrance which we have to continue, and the reflections that we have to share, bring us into a world in which it is not empty rhetoric when we speak of each other as brothers and sisters, then, I think, the memory of the students in Montreal will serve us well.