

Government Orders

The term sexual orientation has been adequately defined. In fact, it has been used in a number of statutes in Canada, including the human rights legislation of eight Canadian provinces. This term has been consistently interpreted by the courts to include heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. It does not include pedophilia. As a matter of fact, pedophilia is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada.

I have also heard concerns from constituents that Bill C-41 will endanger freedom of speech. This legislation is applicable to offences indictable only under the Criminal Code. Bill C-41 is a sentencing bill and will be applicable once a person is found guilty of a crime. Church sermons are not crimes, nor is moral opposition to homosexuality. However, gay bashing is a crime. No one, regardless of their beliefs, will be affected by the legislation unless they commit and are convicted of an offence which is indictable under the Criminal Code. In addition, freedom of religious expression is guaranteed in the charter of rights.

We cannot ignore the fact that hate crimes are on the rise. We must not tolerate hate crimes in our society any longer. The Liberal commitment has been very clear from the beginning. Bill C-41 merely fulfils yet another of our promises outlined in the red book. I have always been opposed to hate crimes of any kind. I campaigned on this election promise and I fully support the bill at final reading.

I firmly believe that Bill C-41 is a crucial measure to send the strong message that hate crimes will not be tolerated in Canadian society. I strongly urge all parliamentarians to support the bill so that we may work together to protect all Canadians.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly noticed the strong emotion of the previous speaker. She is committed to ensuring that hate crimes, as she talked about them, are vigorously punished by the courts.

• (2030)

You and I, Mr. Speaker, both represent ridings in Edmonton. There is a problem in Edmonton and other cities with the Vietnamese gangs who have assaulted other people, white people, because they are of a different origin. If white people were to set upon the Vietnamese section 718.2 would certainly suggest because of their national ethnic origin the court should look on that quite seriously.

However, when the shoe is on the other foot and the Vietnamese gangs are pillaging and terrorizing the neighbourhoods I wonder if the member can explain how the bill will show the same respect and have the courts apply the same type of punishment.

Mrs. Kraft Sloan: Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians we come into the House and operate under certain parliamentary rules and procedures. One of the rules of the House is that we leave bigotry and narrow mindedness at the door before we come in.

I suggest to you that your—

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members should address their remarks to the Chair.

Mrs. Kraft Sloan: To Canadians watching tonight, this is another example of bogus, reverse discrimination consistently used by members of the third party.

This legislation refers to sentencing based on race and ethnicity. It does not specify the race of the ethnicity of the individual. If an individual is convicted of a crime motivated by hate based on race or ethnicity it has nothing to do with whether they are black, white, red, yellow, green or purple.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who just spoke pointed out one of the problems with this legislation.

When my colleague asked about different treatments that might be in place when Vietnamese committed crimes against whites because of race and when whites committed crimes against Vietnamese, she did not consider both to be discrimination. She considered one to be reverse discrimination.

I ask the member why that is. If one is discrimination, why is the other one not pure and simple discrimination?

Mrs. Kraft Sloan: Mr. Speaker, what I said was this is a typical example members on the other side use to illustrate what they refer to as reverse discrimination. I do not refer to reverse discrimination. I refer only to discrimination. I am referring to the things members opposite have used particularly in debates on employment equity when they are constantly screaming about reverse discrimination.

What I said, if the member opposite had been listening, was if a person is convicted of a hate crime based on race or ethnicity it does not matter about skin colour.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for York—Simcoe seems to suffer from the same misapprehension as her colleagues in that she believes Bill C-41 is a bill with only one clause. We hear nothing except the so-called hate clause over and over again.

• (2035)

The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan wants to play on that field. I will join her there.

My mythical Jewish gentleman wanders into a bad section of town and is beaten half to death by someone who does not know he is Jewish in order to steal his wallet. On another occasion he suffers the same type of treatment from someone who knows he is Jewish and decides that for his daily kicks he will beat up on Jews. As an afterthought he steals the wallet. The gentleman in both circumstances is equally damaged and ends up in the hospital. Why in the name of justice and common sense should one thug get a stiffer sentence than the other one?