

*Government Orders*

be just as harmful as a slap in the face or a punch. They leave deep scars that almost never disappear.

When a woman is told by her husband that she is good for nothing, that she is too stupid to understand, that she is not a good mother and spends too much time with friends and not enough time at home, when her husband tells her that he should have left her long ago, she gradually loses all self-esteem.

Life is a nightmare. Fear replaces the feeling of well-being that every human being needs. Isolation prevents victims from blowing the whistle on their abusers and it becomes very difficult for anyone to guess that a shy smile may hide terrible secrets. Injuries to the soul are the most painful, but they are the most difficult to see.

The national survey done last year by Statistic Canada on violence against women attempted to verify the theories on the existence of a link between physical and psychological violence. About one third of the women who are, or have been, married reported that their spouse or estranged spouse had been psychologically violent against them. Former spouses are considered more violent psychologically speaking than present spouses in a proportion of 59 per cent. Although psychological violence can occur without physical violence, the two types of violence occur together in a majority of cases.

Three-quarters of the women who said they were victims of physical or sexual violence reported having also been victims of psychological violence.

● (1235)

Eighteen per cent of the women who are not subjected to physical abuse at the hands of their partner have said that they experience psychological abuse. Physical abuse can take many forms. The main types that are described in the survey are pushing, grabbing or shoving around one's partner. The next type is threatening to hit, slapping, throwing objects at, kicking, biting and punching one's partner. Many women have been battered, sexually assaulted, choked, struck with an object, or threatened with a firearm or a knife. Mr. Speaker, could you ask my colleague behind me to listen quietly during my remarks? I will do the same when he takes the floor.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** The member for Saint-Hubert is asking that the House co-operate in terms of any ongoing discussions, that possibly they could take place behind the curtains. I ask for the co-operation of the House.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Venne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will continue with my remarks. I was just saying that many women have been battered,

sexually assaulted, choked, struck with an object, or threatened with a firearm or a knife. Very few cases are reported where only one form of abuse is involved. The most frequent injuries, in 90 per cent of all cases, are bruises. Then we have cuts, scratches, burns, hairline fractures or broken bones. Almost 10 per cent of injured women said they had suffered internal injuries or had had miscarriages.

The worst part of it all is that the victim of such abuse finds excuses for the abuser. Victims seldom lay charges. On average, the police are notified in only one-quarter of all of the cases of spousal abuse. When charges are laid, the victims withdraw their complaints or decline to testify. Those victims are afraid and, by that very fact, sanction the actions of the aggressors. How often have the courts heard victims say that they have decided on reconciliations, that the husband's actions were not that bad, that he had problems at work or because he had no work, that the children were annoying that day, that he was tired and that he had been drinking?

Precisely, he had been drinking. As if it were an excuse. It is not; it is an aggravating circumstance. The survey in question shows beyond a shadow of a doubt the relationship between alcohol and violence. It reveals that alcohol is a prime factor in spousal assaults. The aggressor had been drinking in half of all the reported incidents. More specifically, the rate of assault on women living with men who drank regularly, that is at least four times a week, was three times higher than for abstinent husbands.

Women whose husbands drink often—five drinks or more at one time—were six times more exposed to assault than women whose husbands do not drink. In 1993, fifty-five per cent of the men who killed their partners had consumed alcohol. Native women are particularly at risk when alcohol is present. It was a determinant factor in nearly every case of sexual assault on native women. Alcohol also played a part in every other offense against native women.

The Criminal Code contains no provisions dealing specifically with intoxication. Bill C-72 will change all that by adding to the Criminal Code section 33.1, which will prohibit the accused from using intoxication as a defence for violent acts.

Before specifically speaking of the use of intoxication as a defence, I must stress that it is important to understand the elements of a criminal offence and the types of offences for which the drunk defence can be invoked.

The concept of criminal responsibility requires that all material and mental facts, the elements of fault, be proven beyond any reasonable doubt for there to have been a criminal offence.