

S. O. 31

ourselves that we are taking a small step forward today. It is an important step but it is just a small step forward. There are so many other things that have to be put in place in a holistic way to address these problems of violence in our society. The law simply will not do it.

Women of colour and immigrant women came to us and talked about how when they report assault or harassment they have been asked by judges if that is not just a part of their culture. They spoke about being harassed by the authorities rather than protected and felt a sense of revictimization.

The Disabled Women's Network came forward and talked about the problems that disabled women have in accessing the criminal justice system and how many disabled women are more vulnerable to violence and yet not believed.

Other national women's groups came forward. They did not support the bill in its wording and talked about the phrase "reasonable fear". They were concerned it might be used against women who could be put on trial. They gave the example of a woman who had undergone some kind of therapy in her personal life having that raised in the court to imply she really did not have it all together. Who would not have to undergo therapy if they had been subjected to the kinds of terror these women have been subjected to? Women's organizations were also concerned about lawyers for the defence saying these people suffer from false memory syndrome. This is being applied to children who were sexually assaulted and women who have been abused and assaulted.

I put forward an amendment in committee to remove the word "reasonable" but unfortunately I was the only one there who supported that amendment. I also put forward a number of amendments to remove the intent provision, exempt labour disputes and provide minimum penalties for repeat offenders. I am really disappointed that did not pass in view of the way these people continue to break those restraining orders, break those peace bonds, show no concern for the victim, show no respect at all for our system of justice or for Parliament and continue to thumb their noses at the courts.

I proposed an amendment to add a preamble to the bill which would explain the issue of criminal harassment. I

understand the member for Halifax who indicated there was no sense in doing this because it would not be printed in the Criminal Code. It would be there, however, for reference as it is in Bill C-49 in terms of judges, Crown attorneys who want to know what Parliament's intent really was in this legislation. It certainly would not have hurt anything. It was ruled out of order unfortunately.

I want to end with some stories from women who have been stalked. They capture the need for a strong, effective anti-stalking law.

One woman has been stalked for eight years. She wrote to me and said: "Being watched, followed, assaulted, vandalized, robbed, threatened with your life, harassed at school and at work is not romantic. It is a violation of one's rights and freedoms". She also said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry but it being one o'clock p.m. I do now leave the chair until two o'clock p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(2).

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

WHIP'S OFFICE

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Québec-Est): Madam Speaker, as we all know, our party has recently been through a most stimulating and promising period of renewal, a most exciting exercise. This kind of situation, if Parliament is to work properly, requires tremendous discipline and, above all, a team of professionals that is truly out of the ordinary.

That is why today, as senior assistant to the Chief Government Whip, I would like to stress the exceptional job done by the team in the Whip's office, and I am referring to David, Pascale, Irma, Barbara, Brenda, Jean-Charles, Léo and Josée, who provided the continuity that is so essential to the work of parliamentarians. Our thanks to you all.