

Government Orders

dispute from the criminal harassment sections. I think that would go too far. Even though for the most part union activity is lawful and conducted according to provincial laws, I do not think Canadians would want a blanket exemption.

It would mean that no matter how much a person was harassed and had reasonable cause to fear for his safety during a labour dispute he would be unable to avail himself of the criminal harassment provisions. I should point out that not all labour dispute activity is lawful. This amendment would make a violent, illegal strike into a lawful labour dispute activity.

I think it goes too far. I can think of all kinds of different areas of activity in Canada that would have as much claim to an exemption as this. I do not think most Canadians would like to make an exception to the criminal harassment provisions no matter how much they believe in union activity and the rights of unions to strike and picket.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my colleague, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I congratulate her on her private member's bill which led the government to finally open its eyes and realize how desperately we need this kind of legislation in Canada to protect women from fear. It will also protect women from well-founded fear of violence when they have been stalked. Until now they have really had no recourse and have never been taken seriously by this Parliament, the law, law enforcers and the community.

I very much support this bill. I want to make that absolutely clear. As a woman in Canadian society I resent being afraid. I resent having to change my activities. As a woman in public life I resent having to be even more concerned about ensuring that I take precautions to walk, move and live in this country in a safe way. I resent the fact that I, or any woman in this country should be in a position where we often feel fearful, look over our shoulders and wonder just what is going on in terms of whether someone is unduly watching, following or stalking, under the definition in this bill.

I want to speak today about this amendment. I refer to the comments made by my colleague opposite, the previous speaker, who said he had concerns about this amendment so he has changed his mind about it. The

member might want to look at the original amendment given in committee by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby that the government voted against in committee. It was not as broad as this amendment but this amendment had to be worded more broadly to have it accepted by the House as an amendment today.

• (1125)

The hon. member talked about the fact that he did not want to see a wide open situation created where violent illegal strikes would be given a blank cheque. Right now we have a situation where non-violent legal strikes are forced into becoming violent legal strikes through lack of support and protection for those on the picket line. Therefore, I think it is stretching the imagination and certainly catering to those who would like to see no rights for trade unions and workers on the picket line to say this kind of an amendment would create a situation where violent, illegal strikes could take place.

There is already legislation on the books that outlines and determines the legality of picketing and what is legal or illegal on the picket line. Let us take one tiny step beyond the legalities and niceties and talk about how this bill, which is designed to protect women and everyone in this country from stalkers, can be used against workers when they take legal economic action against their employers.

I have been told on a number of occasions and certainly we have been told in the Library of Parliament document and the research that was done for us there is a good possibility that this bill could be interpreted and used as a threat over the heads of those on legal picket lines. Many people have told me that a Crown attorney would never proceed with charges regarding a picket line under this bill but I am not talking about charging people. I am talking about using this bill to threaten and intimidate people on legal picket lines. I am talking about being charged by an RCMP officer or a city police officer while on a picket line.

Quite possibly the Crown attorney would never proceed with the charges, but using this bill, making those threats on the picket line and even charging people on the picket line create fear and a situation where people who are going about very legal business in this country under the law can be intimidated into abandoning their very legal picketing.