

*Government Orders*

the north to the south, from Victoria, British Columbia to St. John's, Newfoundland. Women are assaulted in their homes and on the streets simply because they are women.

Members of Parliament often reflect the attitudes that they have grown up with, the attitudes that are out there in society, but the difference is that members of Parliament here in this place have control over the lives of 26 million Canadians and more than half of those Canadians are women. They are people of every racial, ethnic, and religious group.

The member of Parliament who hurled a racist slur is the parliamentary secretary for employment and immigration. He has to make decisions concerning immigration policy, employment equity and job training programs. As a matter of fact, the Employment Equity Act is coming back to this House soon for review. I would submit that his input is not needed in that debate at all.

The member of Parliament who called a female member of Parliament here a slut is the parliamentary secretary to the Treasury Board which is now handling the labour negotiations with the Public Service. One of the major issues, in fact the major issue there, is the issue of pay equity for women. I would submit that his input would be the wrong input to that debate.

There is a lot of heckling, a lot of name calling. I have heard the other members talk about it in this place. I agree with many of the members who have said that is to be expected in a parliamentary democracy. After all, we come here holding very passionate views on matters of substance in our society. We hold different political views. Yes, we are partisan. I am not ashamed to be partisan. I am proud of the views that I represent here and by having debate in this House of Commons, that is how we avoid the fighting on the streets, if you like. This is the place for that kind of debate. There are people here who come from very different perspectives and very different outlooks.

Many of us feel passionately about the issue of equality, as I do. Others come from a different perspective. In my three years here I have only once complained about a remark that was hurled against me here in the House of Commons. That was the time when a direct sexist comment was directed at me.

• (1330)

The point that I want to make and the point that the government Whip seems to misunderstand or failed to recognize is that when one member in this House is hurled a direct sexist insult, it is not just me as a woman member of Parliament who is offended and insulted by that remark.

It is a whole class in society. It is all women in Canadian society. After all, we are not a minority. Let me remind this House that women are the majority in Canada. We are not a minority, but when those sexist comments are hurled at me, it is casting that kind of disgust, that old attitude that women do not belong in this place and do not belong in certain places in society across the bounds to all women in Canada.

That is the difference and that is what the government side does not seem to understand in this debate. When my leader, the hon. member for Yukon, raised the issue with the Prime Minister, he talked about the insults that he has received. Yes, sometimes things have been said to the Prime Minister that are inappropriate, but they are not racist and they are not sexist.

When the Prime Minister talked about the fish, I want the Prime Minister to understand that there is no such thing as fishism, but there is racism and there is sexism that is here in this place. It is everywhere in Canadian society.

Why should I as an individual woman in the House put up with all the regular kind of heckling and name calling which happens, plus the extra sexist kinds of name calling? I should not have to. Why should I as a woman believe that this government and its members really care about women's equality when it has refused to punish or discipline the members who have denigrated women as a group?

Sexist and racist names do not tell you what a member thinks of another member. They tell you what that member thinks of a gender or a racial group of people. The government has refused to acknowledge that point. Actually, it refuses to see it or perhaps it just does not get it. To be charitable, perhaps they just cannot get it.

The motion before us simply asks the Speaker to enforce what are two existing Standing Orders. Standing Order 16(2) states: