

*Government Orders*

sensitize our police and our judiciary to the actual concern and immediacy of this stalking dilemma.

I think the police and the judiciary are well prepared for any kind of help and information we can give to them. I hope that courses and instruction will follow to the necessary degree. I hope that police academies, for instance, will deal with these very real concerns that women have in our society today.

Dr. Simms went on to testify: "Although women's organizations would welcome any measure that offers real protection to abused women no national women's group has identified an urgent need for this law. Why not? In part because we know how difficult it is to persuade police and prosecutors to enforce the law we do have. The problems go beyond the quality of our laws to attitudes in the criminal justice system and inadequate funding for protection".

We must listen to those comments. We must listen to the feeling by women's groups that the police, judiciary and criminal justice system do not fully appreciate the concerns women have.

We also must appreciate the fact that funding has to be present. In Quebec, and I mentioned this at second reading, women's shelters for abused women were advertised. They offered these services to these women. The response was so great that it overloaded the system and there were not the facilities to handle and take care of the women who needed the assistance and so they withdrew the commercials from the media. That is a sad commentary but the fact is that funding is a very important aspect.

I want to deal with another very important point that was made by Lee Lakeman of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. She said: "In the consultations the National Action Committee has been able to do with front line workers we find that the major problem facing women victims of repeated obsessive harassment is that neither the police nor the courts believe that the threats are serious. Often they do not believe that the threats have happened".

• (1540 )

I think people will say: "That is not true. How can our courts and our police forces really believe this?" We have heard from two major national women's organiza-

tions in this country that that concern is very real. If that concern is put forward by both groups in almost the same language then I think it is important for the criminal justice system in this country to listen.

We have to listen to it and we have to make sure that we follow this up. We must not leave this whole question with the passage of this bill. We must proceed with the follow up. We must remove the terror from the women who are being stalked in this country and assaulted and in many cases killed by the stalkers. These are not people in most cases with whom they are unfamiliar. These are former husbands and boyfriends. The fact of the matter is that the law might have been there to a certain degree, but this bill makes it stronger.

We as members of Parliament have an obligation to see that this legislation is passed because it is a major step forward.

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park):** Mr. Speaker, I am listening very carefully to all of the interventions about women being stalked and so on. It is abhorrent, but I have not heard anyone speaking about women being harassed with children or where the women and children are being harassed at the same time.

As a former principal of many schools this used to be a constant problem. The wife would run away with the children to another province to hide from her husband. I had a case where a woman ran away from Winnipeg to Toronto. The husband would find the children in the school yard and the children would be brought to the principal's office in terror.

Is the bill addressing the women who have this double problem? It is not only the women being stalked themselves but the children being stalked at the same time?

**Mr. MacLellan:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the bill does address this. The previous situation was that a woman who was in terror for her safety and perhaps even her life and who took her children with her when she fled the family home could be accused of having taken the children away and fleeing illegally and be subject to court action for taking the children away unlawfully.

The fact is that this bill recognizes that when a woman leaves in terror for her own safety, and in many cases it is the safety of her children, that she is not going to abandon her children. She is going to take her children with her. That is very important.