

Statute Law Amendment Act

By the end of the hearings we certainly had a greater and much deeper degree of understanding about what it meant to be disabled in society. If one is not personally involved, one cannot fully understand some of the difficulties of disabled persons because one does not have the disability.

There are several other points I could make, but I do not have much time left. Some of the bodies which make regulations affecting disabled individuals could be forced under pending legislation to start becoming much more sensitive to the needs of various groups. For example, the CRTC makes regulations covering such things as telephones. It has yet to deal in a forthright way with employed individuals who are hard of hearing and who are denied access to telephones because those systems are not compatible with hearing aids. That is an area upon which the Government could move quickly so that the telephones of people with hearing problems could be made compatible and they would be able to maintain employment. Surely the Government could pass legislation which would require that to take place. It is a very simple device. I am no great supporter of Bell Canada, but in this case it is being a very responsible corporate citizen. Bell Canada has made its telephones fully accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people. However, foreign importers of telephones refuse to do that. Surely the Government has a responsibility to tell those importers that if they want to import telephones into Canada they have to be accessible to individuals who require hearing aids in order to function fully in society.

The last point I should like to make would not cost the Government a red cent, not a dime. It should finally do what organizations representing the disabled have been calling for over the last two years. It should establish a subcommittee on disabilities and handicaps of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, for example. These organizations and disabled individuals must have a forum in which to bring their concerns before people who are making decisions on their behalf; in other words, legislators.

I welcome this travelling committee. I think it is a great idea. It will fill a void. It will allow the Government to hear the real concerns of those individuals. I have no qualms about it. In fact, I wish I was a member of the committee. However, the one productive thing which the House could do quickly would be to establish a subcommittee on disabilities and handicaps under the House of Commons Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. It would go a long way toward allowing people who need a voice to be heard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Hon. Member a question. I listened this morning to Hon. Members praising the fact that certain things were changing. They indicated that persons should have mobility rights, the right to work in any part of the country, and not to be discriminated against because of where they live.

The Hon. Member is familiar with the high unemployment areas of Canada. He has visited northern and rural areas. Very

shortly the summer student employment program will start. Because of Section 15 of the Charter, on Monday of this week the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) sent a telex to all Manpower offices in Canada removing the residency requirement as it related to potential employees on summer student employment projects. She indicated that it was no longer a requirement for a student to be resident in a community or an area to which the job related or for which referrals went out. The Hon. Member knows that when grants are given to communities in high unemployment areas, they expect students in the community to work on the grants. In fact, there would be absolute war in some communities where normally jobs are not available if students from major metropolitan areas with available jobs were hired to work in those communities.

Mr. McDermid: It works the opposite way.

Mr. Baker: I will deal with that Hon. Member this afternoon when the Minister makes her statement on the energy pricing agreement. Does the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) agree with the telex the Minister sent on Monday? There are exceptions to the Charter in terms of affirmative action programs, and the Government approves money to create employment in a high unemployment area. Her telex indicated that this summer the residency requirement would no longer be in place and that Manpower offices would have to match jobs with students across the country by computer. Does the Hon. Member agree with that particular aspect of the Charter?

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the telegram to which the Hon. Member referred. However, as a general principle, I think the community is better able to determine its own priorities by itself.

My concern in terms of employment opportunities does not centre on the summer student employment program. It concerns a number of areas affecting disabled persons. We cannot isolate unemployment and only say that it is the major problem of the disabled community. Of course it is, in that without a job one cannot become a whole person. However, each one of their problems is synonymous with the other. We cannot talk about providing a person with decent and adequate employment without providing them with an education or access to an education. We cannot talk about education and employment without talking about access to transportation, to get them from home and to the job. We cannot talk about adequate employment without talking about deinstitutionalization, getting people into the community and supporting them. All those matters are intertwined. May I call it one o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 2 p.m.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.