

Supply

only accept the fact that life is hard it would be so much easier for you. We continually have people who should know better standing up in the House and saying we have to make things easier for people. We have to make things fairer. Canadians know life is what we make it.

We are talking today about the notion of equality. Equality is essentially fairness and impartiality. That is what the dictionary says. Government cannot make life fair. Parliament cannot create fairness any more than it can legislate goodness or compassion.

Calvin Coolidge, a former president of the United States, said: "The people cannot look to legislation generally for success. Industry, thrift and character are not conferred by act or resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil. It can provide no substitute for the rewards of service. It can of course care for the defective and recognize distinguished merit. The normal must care for themselves. Self-government means self-support".

Does this mean we should find unfairness and discrimination acceptable? Of course not, and we do not. It is not government that helps us to act fairly and impartially. This must come from an act of decision by ourselves as individuals.

Government is really just us. Government is part of us. It is something we create as a society. It is a reflection especially in a democracy of what we want for ourselves. That is why we choose representatives from us to carry out our wishes. Somehow there is a feeling that government should create the kind of ethic that is not otherwise present.

• (1515)

There are things we can and should do as individuals to act more fairly and more impartially. We should do those but it is not something that can be legislated.

Canadians want to see people treated as individuals. We are significant in and of ourselves because we are us, so to speak. We do not have to gain significance because of how we relate in a group. We are significant as ourselves, not as something that is labelled, not because we are women or because we are vertically challenged or because we have more pigment in our skins than some other people. Those things are not relevant.

What is relevant is what is in our hearts, what we are capable of, how we strive to achieve the things that are important to us. That is what is significant. We need to realize that is the sort of self-reliance and desire for excellence that should be promoted.

There seems to be a feeling in this country that somehow somebody owes us something, that we are entitled to the things that for centuries we have struggled to achieve. Now they are owed to us and must be delivered to us. This is not practical. It is not common sense. It flies in the face of every experience in human history.

Some of these notions have been tried in other countries. In the United States, this sort of movement to deliver so-called equality to different groups has not succeeded. The disadvantages have outweighed the very real good that was thought to be promoted by these kinds of programs. It is not that the intention behind these programs was not good; it was very good. We all want fairness. We all want people to achieve their full potential.

I would submit this is not something that can be delivered to people. It is only something we can work for and earn. We can ensure that people have the best opportunities to succeed in those goals by treating them as individuals, by allowing them to have equality of opportunity but letting the result of that opportunity rest with the individual.

Abraham Lincoln said that if you have what it takes, the world will take what you have. I believe that is true. We do not and should not be splitting the world into groups. We should be working together as valuable members of society, as individuals with full potential.

It is important that each one of us make a commitment in our dealings with each other to be fair and impartial, both publicly and privately. It is something we need, but not as something legislated, not as something that is owed to us. It should be something we work and strive together to achieve. It cannot be legislated. It would destroy what we want to have in the spirit of individuals to act otherwise.

I think we each applaud the notion of the hon. member's motion. We want to have equality of opportunity. Our charter of rights says we are equal before and under the laws of this country and that must be maintained. However, to give special preference and special assistance to people is to deny them the right to meet their goals on their own merit with their own achievements. We should not be moving in the direction of this motion.

• (1520)

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found the member's speech interesting. She was talking about individualism as if we stand alone and do not need anything else around us.

What I hear her saying is that this country has never had and does not have today any sexism or racism that we need to worry about, that there is no stereotyping of the disabled and the physically challenged. She very well knows those very people came before us and told us that of them, something like 2 per cent or less have university educations. Two per cent or less have proper jobs because they do not and cannot access jobs because of stereotyping. This is just the physically challenged. I am not even talking about the racial situation.