

also suggest that the Hon. Member speak to the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights who, I understand, now chairs the Standing Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped. He is very well informed in this area. I know he is doing everything he can to ensure that the recommendations of the committee are put into action so that these people will be better served in our society.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Cadieux (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I may say I am somewhat astonished at the nature of the motion before the House today. Although I share the concern expressed by the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) for achieving concrete and effective recognition of equality rights, I still believe that it is a denial of the facts to maintain that the Government's response to the report of the Sub-Committee on Equality Rights does not constitute a clear and unequivocal step in the right direction.

Considering the controversial nature of the issues on which the Government had to take a position, it is to be congratulated on its progressive and balanced response to the concerns expressed by a large number of Canadians. Mr. Speaker, the Government has made a clear commitment to abolish the principle of a mandatory retirement age within the Public Service. The Government's commitment in this regard cannot be called ambiguous. The President of Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) has promised to ask the Treasury Board forthwith to revoke the provisions of the Public Service Superannuation Regulations which prescribe mandatory retirement at the age of 65. Concrete steps have already been taken in this respect.

The Government's commitment regarding mandatory retirement is not limited to its own institutions. Indeed, it has recognized the need for extending the principle of voluntary access to retirement to the private sector businesses that come under its jurisdiction. Thus, Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act so that when an employee feels he has been discriminated against because of his age, the employer can no longer use the argument that he has to retire because he has reached the normal retirement age.

However, while being firmly convinced of the legitimacy of this reform, the Government must be alert to the impact it will have on labour relations in the private sector. Mr. Speaker that is why the Government has a duty to consult with employers and labour organizations to determine the most effective way of implementing a flexible retirement policy.

Moreover, the Government must ensure that the proposed amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act with respect to mandatory retirement are coherent and consistent with the in-depth review of this legislation by the Government which is now under way. The purpose of this process is certainly not to delay official recognition of the principle of voluntary retirement.

Motions

If we could make instantaneous and coherent changes in the present system with a wave of a magic wand, so that the system would reflect the Government's commitment with respect to mandatory retirement, the desired reforms would already be in place. However, since we do not have that magic wand, we have to come to grips with reality.

After this process we will bring before Parliament a Bill to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and various other Acts as a consequence thereof.

The Sub-Committee pointed out that about thirty Acts or regulations set a maximum age varying from 65 to 75 for persons holding positions in the Public Service. It may also be necessary, Mr. Speaker, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, to allow premiums and benefits under the Act to be paid beyond the age of 65.

We hope to be able to introduce around the end of the year the various amendments which we would like to make to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The Government will in this way recognize that flexible or gradual retirement is tomorrow's answer. The Government recognizes that most senior citizens can no longer increase their purchasing power in the same way as active workers. Generally, the welfare of a senior citizen depends entirely on his former earnings and public assistance, and his income is constantly being eroded by inflation.

A worker in good health is suddenly and traumatically forced to become idle by compulsory retirement. This practice is rather dehumanizing since it does not take into account the health of the worker, his desire to continue to work or even his economic needs. Many retirees therefore feel useless and have serious economic problems.

According to the American Medical Association, compulsory retirement can even lead to a deterioration of health if not to premature death. Finally, from the aspect of our national economy, we shall be able to stop wasting the talents of a manpower with a great wealth of experience.

Abolition of compulsory retirement is also likely to favour women, young people and visible minorities.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, workers seem to have a tendency to retire as soon as their financial resources allow them to do so. The proposed amendments to the Canada Pension Plan this year should therefore have an impact in this regard. It is proposed that contributors to the plan will be able to receive reduced benefits as soon as they reach the age of 60 or to continue to accumulate retirement credits until the age of 70. In fact, the public service pension plans already allow workers to retire at 50 with a reduced pension.

The Government is also trying to come to an agreement with the provinces to provide a pension for homemakers. This is another action which could have a major impact. If a couple can be certain of receiving two pensions under the Canada