

Employment Equity

Advisor, Geoff Norquay, to his office to discuss her suggestions in detail. The Prime Minister said that he would give a reply as to what could be done. They went to the Prime Minister's Office and had a meeting with Mr. Norquay in the PMO. They came back and were quite ecstatic about this because they had a promise from Mr. Norquay and the Prime Minister's Office that they would get back to them before this Bill comes again before the House for report stage. They were happy about that. You know what happened? There was no reply at all from the Prime Minister, and no reply at all from the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) before this Bill came back from the House ten days ago for report stage. What happened was that the Prime Minister broke a commitment that he would, once again, get back to the disabled Canadians before report stage.

● (1210)

I ask now why a simple courtesy like that was not extended to Beryl Potter and disabled Canadians? That is why they were so angry in the gallery of the House of Commons last Monday. You know what they did in the Prime Minister's Office? They sent a reply the day disabled Canadians came before Parliament to demonstrate, the day disabled Canadians in the gallery spoke out against this Bill, and the very day they were here in Ottawa. They did not do it seven or eight days sooner, as they promised, before this Bill came back for report stage. When the Government treats Canadians in that way it does not deserve to be around very long. That is why you have people like Beryl Potter—a Conservative Party supporter for, I assume, many years, certainly in support of this Prime Minister—saying in public that she was never, never so disillusioned in her life.

This Bill has a noble purpose, and the Minister of Employment has stated many times that it is to promote equity in the workplace so we have a chance to correct the discrimination made against the four target groups in this country; the four target groups being the women, native people, visible minorities, and of course the handicapped in our country. That is the purpose of the Bill. There is nothing in the Bill that is going to make it mandatory. The Minister of Employment quoted Judge Rosalie Abella a couple of times earlier this morning. She did not quote some of the important passages that Judge Rosalie Abella referred to when it came to mandatory affirmative action. I quote from page 195 of her report where she talks about mandatory measures versus voluntary measures that the Government has introduced in this Bill. This is what Rosalie Abella is saying:

A voluntary program with a mandatory reporting requirement is nonetheless voluntary in the absence of a requirement to remedy the discriminatory practices disclosed by the information reported.

In other words, we need mandatory action.

Second, she says, and I quote:

A requirement of public reporting may result in public pressure on a company to revise its systems, but is unrealistic to rely on public opinion as an effective monitoring agency. It results in a speculative and scattered approach and creates

the perception, in the absence of enforcement, that the issue is deserving of only casual attention.

In other words, she is saying we need mandatory affirmative action. One last quote from her report on page 197:

Given the seriousness and apparent intractability of employment discrimination, it is unrealistic and somewhat ingenious to rely on there being sufficient public goodwill to fuel a voluntary program.

We have a Minister and a Government saying that the court of public opinion will prevail. Public opinion will force the Bank of Montreal, the Royal Bank, Bell Telephone and all others to make sure there is employment equity in this country. I do not believe that, and the four target groups do not believe that, and that is why they want changes.

I referred to Beryl Potter on disabled Canadians, and my friend from Notre-Dame-de-Grace referred to a statement made this morning once again saying that this Bill is not going to help them very much at all in this country. I also want to refer to other groups.

We have here a statement from the Inuit people of Canada saying that Bill C-62 is of limited value. We have a quotation here from the National Association of Women in Law, Suzanne Boivin, who says:

Nothing will change, unfortunately it is simply wishful thinking.

We have example after example of target groups before the committee that have said exactly the same thing, that this Bill is not good enough and it does not go far enough. What we called for in the committee were five different principles to be enshrined in this particular piece of legislation. One is, in the absence of real enforcement, adequate penalties under mandatory equity schemes where necessary. Second, we want to have some reference in the Bill to the whole principle of equal pay for work of equal value. We want reference in the Bill to contract compliance, and we want an obligation in the Bill to negotiate employment equity with a bargaining agent when there is a union present in the workforce. Finally, we want federal Departments included in this legislation.

Those points of view were also supported by the vast majority of witnesses that came before our committee, and in particular all the witnesses who came from the four different target groups covered by this legislation.

In summary, this legislation is voluntary equity with a mandatory reporting process. It is not going to enforce anything unless there is rank and blatant discrimination that can be picked up by the Canadian Human Rights Commission under the Human Rights Act. The only part of this Bill that is mandatory is the failure to report, which is Clause 6, Then all we have is a \$50,000 fine. I ask you what is a \$50,000 fine for Bell Canada? What is a \$50,000 fine for the Royal Bank? What is a \$50,000 fine for the Bank of Montreal? It is peanuts. Now there may not be many big companies like that, as a Member for Ontario said.

But it is important, as the four target groups said to have adequate penalties so we do have some kind of punishment if the law is broken. What we suggest in our Party is that you