

participate, we must insert "reasonable accommodation", keeping in mind the *bona fide* occupational justification.

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, I would like to appeal to my Conservative colleagues with regard to the suggested amendment which calls for some definition of "reasonable accommodation". We discussed this in committee. The Parliamentary Secretary has again expressed his misgivings about this matter. He feels that there may be problems with the legal aspects, that if we define "reasonable accommodation", it may restrict other factors. This resolution was modified in order to meet that objection. He may say that if it is too defined it may put too great a burden on a company or organization and, therefore, we should not be too precise. There has been some effort on the part of the courts to begin to define this matter. With the assistance of the Department of Justice, such a modification could be worked on before this Bill is passed.

Some people may see this legislation as a vehicle to ignore its real intent. One could provide reasonable accommodation for a person who has lost part of one finger and call that person disabled. One could look after a large number of people with very slight disabilities and then claim to have dealt with a lot of disabled people. That would make one look good, but one would not really be dealing with disabled people.

This amendment is really only providing examples and guidelines. It would provide, in the legislation, an indication of the direction in which Parliament wants to go. It wants to deal with genuine disabilities. Numerous reports over the years have indicated a requirement for clarification as to what is meant by "reasonable accommodation". That is in the spirit of what is intended by the Government. Some will say that it will cost lots of money. Specifying the requirement for very expensive equipment would put an organization into jeopardy.

A very high percentage of disabled people are on welfare or out of work. Is it not a good idea for the Government to assist companies to provide facilities for the handicapped so that they may work? When the handicapped were on the Hill today they chanted that they wanted jobs. They do not want welfare. They want equity, employment, jobs.

Instead of passing a Bill which says that companies should do something about this, why does the Government not put in place a financial program to give support to companies and organizations to provide those facilities? The Government should provide incentives to companies to make them feel it is worthwhile to use the skills and resources of the handicapped.

We are told that one in every eight Canadians has a disability. That amounts to millions of Canadians. We are not talking about a small or insignificant group of people. This is a major need in the country. One in eight potential workers has a handicap. A high percentage of that group cannot hold a job because of a lack of the required facilities and access. They do not have reasonable accommodation.

I plead with the Parliamentary Secretary to attempt to have his Department and the Department of Justice work out a

Employment Equity

solution for this concern. The Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) gleaned his definition from handicapped groups which have given a great deal of thought to the matter. Perhaps it can be improved, but to ignore this request, which provides a direction or guideline, seems to me to be most unfortunate.

Clause 4 of the Bill says that:

An employer shall implement employment equity by

(b) instituting such positive policies and practices and making such reasonable accommodation as will ensure that persons in designated groups achieve a degree of representation—

It does not say what kinds of handicaps and needs must be fulfilled. What does this refer to? Unless we have an indication that we are talking about provision of physical accessibility, assistive devices, flexible job design and modification and human support services, it will not be implemented. This Bill is so vague that it is hard to even talk about it. It contains too many vague good wishes and too little in terms of specifics. I would once again like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to reflect on this with his colleagues and determine whether "reasonable accommodation" could not be specified more clearly.

● (1710)

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, the right of the disabled to equal employment opportunities has a necessary prerequisite. This amendment will put that prerequisite into the Bill. Although the Bill recognizes the need, it does not make it a requirement and does not define it in such a way that people covered under the Act will know exactly what they have to do. Again I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to look at the need. It makes much more sense to put it in the Bill than leave it to the guidelines. That often means leaving it to the bureaucrats to decide.

Over the years, and I am sure the Hon. Member recognizes this, regulations have often been used to weasel out of the commitments made in the Bill. Regulations are worded in such a way that some of the best legislation loses its effectiveness. We as parliamentarians only get a marginal look at the regulations and very little opportunity to make sure their wording is acceptable. In the end they do not have the weight of law. They can be changed in many cases by Order in Council. In some cases that is not a bad thing, but they are interpreted by the bureaucrats rather than the courts.

This amendment says we should define reasonable accommodation and put it in the law so that everyone will know what it is. As was expressed on many occasions, particularly by a number of witnesses who came before the committee, although Clause 4(b) makes reference to reasonable accommodation, it does not define it. The report *Equality for All* makes specific recommendations but they were not taken into consideration when the Bill was drafted. I guess it was not even in place at that time. However, that is no reason for not using it now. Recommendation No. 80 says: