

*Government Orders*

When employment equity and fairness to all is the goal, it is not by penalizing one group of employees that the goal will be achieved. That has just not happened. An employer who wants to achieve employment equity in his business does not start laying people off, only to replace them with a larger number of people from a group described as a visible minority. What he does is take advantage of jobs opening up to make adjustments, to restore balance within the organization and attain some stability, a certain degree of equity between various groups, gender equity, wage equity, racial equity and equity between people with disabilities and those who do not have disabilities. That is how an employer can manage to meet modern standards, decent standards of employment equity.

He does not tell an employee already penalized by a layoff: "What a shame. We have an opening, but instead of rehiring you, we will give the preference to an employee who already enjoys some degree of protection as a member of a visible minority".

• (1600)

All employees should be on an equal footing. I think that there should be no exceptions when the time comes to recall employees who may have lost their jobs prematurely.

I do not know how much time I have remaining. Do I have time for a few more comments? I gather that your silence means that I do, Mr. Speaker.

Based on the foregoing, the Bloc Quebecois cannot support Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 4. On the other hand, Motion No. 3 appears to be much more reasonable, seeking a form of equity at work that is in line with our standards of sound human resources management. We will therefore support Motion No. 3.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having given me your undivided attention. For the time being, those are the comments I had on this bill.

[English]

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will be listening just as religiously to my arguments as I talk about Bill C-76, the Budget Implementation Act.

It is a little unfortunate that at this late date we are discussing the implementation of February's budget some months later. It seems that as time passes and we get away from the budget process the government is hoping people will forget about some of the fiscal crises the country will still have to go through because of some decisions taken and some decisions not taken in last February's budget.

It is interesting how we get taken up with other issues in Parliament when this overriding fiscal issue will drive the

agenda in the months and years to come whether or not we like it. It is good to get to the fiscal issues.

I would like to speak specifically to the first group of amendments to Bill C-76. I am most interested in Motions Nos. 1, 3 and 4 within the group. I remind all members that the first 10 clauses of Bill C-76 contain changes to the way we address the public service and changes to the workforce adjustment directive brought in by the government in the February budget.

These changes mark a breach of a very clear and explicit promise by the Liberal government upon implementation of the budget. On July 22, 1994 the President of the Treasury Board wrote to the public service union. I think members opposite will be very interested in what he said. I quote from the letter to the public service union:

This government has stated in the past, and remains committed to the principle, that the employment protection provisions in the workforce adjustment directive will only be changed through negotiations.

We all know what happened in the February budget. Like so many other Liberal promises, the promise to negotiate changes to the workforce adjustment directive went by the wayside. The government is now legislating change and the promise made by the President of the Treasury Board on July 22 is no longer being upheld.

We in this party have always said we felt the workforce adjustment directive would have to be changed. We said that consistently. We said there would be some layoffs in the public service. We said that consistently. We did not change the story after the election. We kept the same story with the same truth from start to finish. It is unfortunate that the double tongued Liberals have decided to change the directive after they promised not to do so.

• (1605)

They should never have promised it in the first place. If they knew they would not keep it, that they would not be able to do it and that they would legislate it, they should have been honest enough to say that up front. At least the Reform Party has been consistent in its belief of what would have to happen to the workforce adjustment directive. I remind the public service unions and members opposite that the government has backed out on another promise.

Another firm promise was made by the President of the Treasury Board in the House with respect to Motion No. 1. He promised that no public servant would be paid if he or she was not doing work. The promise was made in response to reports that this was happening in the public service. We tried to find out more particulars, but it seems there are no reporting requirements from departments to the Public Service Commission on how many people are being paid to stay at home or paid not to work under the workforce adjustment directive. Unfortunately we cannot get exact numbers, but we extracted a promise from