

Private Members' Business

nal group to be able to bid on this contract. Because of this, this business person was disqualified from bidding on these contracts. Any way one looks at that, it is discrimination.

Why does the government then feel that we need employment equity? I guess its reason is to correct perceived injustices in the workplace, an honourable motive. However, when we look at numbers we see that these injustices are often only perceived, and mostly perceived by government.

I would like to present a few more stats to add to those presented by the hon. member for North Vancouver a little earlier.

There are 570,000 people currently regulated by the present Employment Equity Act. Women make up 45.6 per cent of those covered. When looking at women in the overall Canadian workforce, we find that 45.9 per cent of the workforce is female. There is a difference of .03 per cent between those who work under the bodies that are covered by the Employment Equity Program and those in the greater workforce. That is .03 per cent. We have to ask ourselves if this .3 per cent is enough of a difference to warrant the cost and the damage done by these employment equity programs.

• (1825)

According to StatsCan for example, in 1992 single women made about 99 per cent of the salaries of single men. Many salary differences between men and women can be explained by lifestyle choices, for example, the choice to stay at home and raise a family. Of course, that is a very honourable choice indeed.

As well, the Economic Council of Canada released a study in 1992 that found no correlation between wage levels and a person's country of origin. The same report also found that immigrants have a lower unemployment rate than Canadian-born workers. The conclusion reached in the council's report was that there is no significant discrimination against immigrants in general.

In 1994 the employment equity report said that in total, women occupied 47 per cent of government jobs while 47.3 per cent were available to work. Jobs held by women increased by a full percentage point in 1993-94. They took a full per cent more of the top jobs despite the fact that the executive category declined by 6 per cent. Again, would government have us bring in costly programs to adjust for a difference of .3 per cent?

I have a few more statistics. The civilian staff at the RCMP is 82.6 per cent female. At Citizenship Canada, 74 per cent are female. However, in Transport Canada more than 75 per cent are male. Are we to assume that this under-representation of

women in the transport department is caused by discrimination? I would say no. However, that is what the report wrongly assumed and this illustrates the fundamental flaw in the report. It is difficult to determine why there are differences, but we cannot automatically assume that it is due to rampant discrimination.

Again I ask the question: Why do we need employment equity programs and legislation? The answer is: I do not think we do. Then why do we have them? I believe we have them because the Liberal government's agenda has been and in fact is set too much by special interest groups and these special interest groups support employment equity. They are not driven by public interest.

We have had too much government based on the vocal input from a minority and too little government based on the less vocal input of the majority. We have had government by the minority instead of the majority. What we have with employment equity is a playing field that is tipped in favour of special interest groups. That is not what Canada is all about.

The motion today calls for the immediate end to employment equity and I fully support the motion. In keeping with the Reform practice of proposing positive alternatives, I will explain the Reform Party's position on employment equity by making five short statements:

One, all Canadians are equal before and under the law and all workers have the right to be free from discrimination in the workplace. Two, the market will provide solutions to a representative workplace in the private sector. Three, it is the role of government to ensure equality of opportunity rather than to determine equality of employment outcome in the public sector. Four, the workplace should be free from arbitrary obstructions to hiring or promotion. Merit must be the sole hiring criterion. Five, employment equity legislation is coercive, discriminatory, unnecessary and costly. It should be discontinued.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have very little time and I will use it as well as I can.

To quote a longtime good friend: "I will be happy that equality has arrived when an unqualified, incompetent woman has as good a chance of getting hired and promoted as an unqualified, incompetent man". That is equality.

Employment equity is not about special treatment; it is about equality of opportunity. History proves and the figures prove that in fact a minority in our population have had preference in hiring and promotion. How else does one explain that 84 per cent of clerks in the federal government are women, the lowest paid? Even within that category of clerks, men rise to the top more often than women.