

separated or divorced at the time of the Report. Of those women who were married, 55 per cent supported one or more children.

The government of Canada is the largest employer of women, and, indeed, the largest employer in Canada. At the time of the report there were some 475,000 persons employed by the government of Canada of whom 25 per cent were located in the national capital area, part of which I have the honour to represent. There is a statement in the report of the Commission which I believe to be extremely important. It sets forth more clearly than I could ever do the importance of women in the scheme of things for the government of this country. The following appears at page 105 of the report:

The position of women employees in the Government of Canada deserves close examination, not only because the government employs a large number of women in a great variety of occupations but because government employment practices should demonstrate its principles. Since Canada has officially subscribed to principles recognizing women's rights to equality of opportunity, the Canadian government must ensure that its employment laws, policies and practices reflect and implement these principles. The government should also make its own adherence to principle conspicuous to other employers.

I am sure there is no one in this House who would disagree with that statement. I believe there is no better way of doing as the Royal Commission suggested than by the government making its adherence to principle conspicuous to other employers by establishing within the statutes governing employment, that at least as far as women are concerned there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex or any other aspect. Some may say provision for this is already in the statute. But I have examined the Public Service Employment Act, and I find that though there is some statement with respect to the question of discrimination on the ground of sex it is not as embracing as I think all of us would like it to be.

I am referring specifically to sections 10 and 12 of that statute governing the appointment and selection standards of the public service. It is stated that appointments within the public service shall be based on selection according to merit "as determined by the Commission and shall be made by the Commission at the request of the deputy head concerned." And so on. Section 12 gives the Commission the power to set selection standards. It reads:

The Commission may, in determining pursuant to section 10 the basis of assessment and merit in relation to any position or class of positions, prescribe selection standards as to education, knowledge, experience, language, age, residence or any other matters which in the opinion of the Commission are necessary or desirable . . .

Then, with respect to selection, subsection (2) reads:

The Commission, in prescribing selection standards under subsection (1) shall not discriminate against any person by reason of sex, race, national origin, colour or religion.

These are good phrases. But my point is that they only apply to one field of legislative protection, that is, in relation to selection. There is nothing in the act with respect to men or women in relation to sex, national origin, colour or religion to give them protection in carrying on their duties in the particular positions to which they are appointed.

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There is, as well, in section 10 a bald statement that questions with respect to merit should be determined by the Commission. While I am prepared to say that the Commission ought to have the authority to employ reasonably, I am not prepared to say in the same breath that the employees of that Commission and the employees of the government of Canada generally ought not to be given the reasonable protection which is provided by the Canada Labour Code, protection which has proved effective on the industrial side, protection which is accorded in most of the provinces of Canada and which should be granted to women and to others in the public service of Canada. As I say, as the largest employer in the country, the government should be expected to provide leadership.

I recognize that this is a question which has been subject to some debate. I think its importance has been crystallized in the growing concern that has centred on the concept of delegation of authority. Section 31 of the statute deals with this matter. It reads:

Where an employee, in the opinion of the deputy head, is incompetent in performing the duties of the position he occupies, or is incapable of performing those duties—

The section goes on to outline what may happen in that event. Mr. Speaker, justice can vary with the length of the chancellor's foot, so to speak and many instances of this unfortunate variation have come to my attention. With respect to this matter and many others, there should be incorporated into the statute the protection which is afforded under the Canada Labour Code. The statutes considered and passed by this parliament, as opposed to regulations which we as Members of Parliament never see, ought to be the basis for the rights I want to see protected, confirmed and advanced. I proposed this motion because I believed that the government should always be in the van of labour-management relations. It should always be pointing the way to the industries and other undertakings in Canada so that these industries and undertakings can look to the federal government for leadership and for example. I believe that by establishing in the acts set forth in the motion the fair employment practices as suggested by the motion the government would be providing this leadership.

• (1720)

Mr. Hugh Poulin (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is significant that I rise following the learned speech of my colleague and friend from Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), who in his opening address to this House a few weeks ago was pleased to state that in one sense I am a constituent of his. And, indeed, that is so; but in another and very real sense the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is a constituent of mine. He comes to this chamber every day to perform his parliamentary duties, and in so doing comes into the riding I am very pleased to represent.

On many occasions in the past, the hon. member and I have practised our profession in a friendly or adversary way in this community, and I am sure that during our joint careers in this House we will have the same opportunity to engage in this type of friendly debate. It is the kind of debate that is designed for all hon. members of the House, and on this occasion seeks to provide for the public service of Canada the best possible fair employment practices.