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Let me discuss the concept of systemic discrimination. Underlying the Abella report and all subsequent legislation has been the conviction that racism in the form of systemic discrimination is rampant in our society.

Abella's report stated: "Non-whites all across Canada complained of racism. They undeniably face discrimination both overt and unjust". This report was from a commission that went across the country.

Who would present themselves to a committee such as that? Would people who are happy in their circumstance go out of their way to present? I do not think so. Perhaps even in this first statement of systemic discrimination we have a distortion.

Is Canada a racist country? Perhaps this would be the strongest argument for an affirmative action program as we see here. We have equity departments throughout the public service and the private sector and race relations councils where individuals come forward to attest to alleged discrimination and racism.

As I have mentioned, typically the people who come forward are self-selected individuals who address these committees. They are motivated by circumstance. Do we hear from the whole population? It is true racism does exist. I believe all societies have an element of racism to some degree. I also believe Canada is by far not the worst. Part of our opposition to this bill is in terms of guarding against a piece of legislation we believe would promote an attitude of racism in the sense of dividing people rather than bringing them together in our great society.

Is racism limited to only one race? Even as the media discusses this issue we hear the terms white and racist put together interchangeably. Even the term reverse discrimination which has been discussed today assumes discrimination goes only one way, from whites to non-whites. I reject that notion. If we look at racism in real terms it can be from one race toward any race. I do not think whites or other races have any particular claim to it.

Is racism real in Canada? It is an element in our society like in any other. Let me cite two reports. The Economic Council of Canada put out a report in 1991, "New Faces in a Crowd: Economic and Social Impacts of Immigration". It concluded Canada had been remarkably successful in assimilating immigrants from diverse backgrounds. It found there was no significant discrimination against immigrants and that tolerance toward immigrants was high and was found to be increasing.

Another report from the Economic Council of Canada in 1992, "Earnings of Immigrants: A Comparative Analysis", focused more on what immigrants were paid. It found unemployment among immigrants was actually lower than for Canadian born citizens. This report's central conclusion was there

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was no evidence of a systemic pay discrimination against immigrants on the basis of colour.

There is a necessity to recognize diversity in our society. The whole basis of employment equity rests on the raw numbers of diversity. It is argued it should be reflected in employment in the public sector and to a lesser extent in the private sector.

However, the diversity measured by employment equity is measured through a voluntary process called self-identification. Individuals must declare themselves as belonging to a particular group that makes them eligible for employment equity. This can be a very great problem with the proposed system. This information is accumulated primarily through the census of population data. For gender the process is a given, but the self-identification process begins to break down when determining who are visible minorities or who are persons with disabilities.

• (1545)

For instance, to determine if one is a member of a visible minority one has to go through a four-step process as defined by the employment equity data program established by Statistics Canada. Step No. 1: persons are asked which ethnic or cultural group their ancestors belonged to. They are even asked to mark or specify as many as applicable among 15 possible choices. Step No. 2: persons are asked in what country they were born; if Canada, what province or territory; if outside Canada, what other country. Step No. 3: a question is asked about the person's mother tongue. Step No. 4 attempts to group those the first three steps failed to classify.

The process is not foolproof. It does not produce accurate results. It is not precise. It is fully voluntary. Yet it is the foundation of employment equity.

The government uses self-identification for implementation of its employment equity in the public service and here too the process fails miserably. For example, a voluntary self-identification survey was recently sent to 1,700 employees of the House of Commons. Only 23 per cent returned the survey. What basis could the employer use to implement a policy such as employment equity?

There could be a number of other reasons that could explain alleged discrimination. Since self-identification is voluntary it will not be precise. The process, as I have mentioned, is not and should not be foolproof. There are social, cultural and educational explanations that may have an effect upon the disparities in society that have absolutely nothing to do with discrimination.

A glaring example of the inadequacies of the voluntary self-identification program were illustrated in a letter I read recently in the *Globe and Mail* of February 28. I would like to read part of it: