

*Adjournment Debate*

attention of the minister, he ordered an investigation. I have only one comment about the investigation, which the minister describes as a full investigation: the investigation is an internal departmental investigation. I think the public would have more confidence in this investigation if it were a public, open investigation in which everyone could see that justice were done rather than being an internal departmental investigation, in other words, the department investigating itself.

However, be that as it may, there is an investigation, and perhaps some good will come of it. I certainly hope it does because if there is any way to put a little energy behind the affirmative action program in Manitoba, perhaps it will be found in that investigation.

What strikes me most deeply about the memo is the fact that it raises the whole question of what level of commitment to affirmative action the government has. Just how much energy is the government putting into affirmative action? The memo raises this question because it seems to me that only in government which has no real and firm commitment to an affirmative action program could any civil servant even conceive of writing such a memo to employees whose job or mandate it is to promote such a program. I think what the government has to deal with is the whole question of its level of commitment to affirmative action.

The minister responded to me by saying that the government is deeply committed to affirmative action and citing the "very major" success of the affirmative action program in the public sector. I want to put on the record a few facts about the program in the public sector, which the minister describes as a very major success and as evidence that the government is deeply committed to affirmative action. The annual report of the Public Service Commission for 1981 gives statistics in relation to affirmative action in the public sector, and I will put some of those on the record here tonight. Only 4.3 per cent of the management category in the public service are women, and 81.6 per cent of the administrative support category are women, so at the top end of the public service there are mostly men and at the bottom end of the public service there are mostly women. With regard to salary levels, 67 per cent of public servants earning less than \$10,000 were women, while 97 per cent of those earning over \$50,000 were men.

I see an indication that I should be winding up very quickly. I just want to say that the statistics I have quoted—and many more could be quoted—demonstrate that the results of affirmative action are as bleak in the public service as they are in the private sector.

**Mr. Douglas Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, before discussing the specific question let me provide for the

hon. member some background information about the affirmative action program.

Affirmative action is a process undertaken by an employer to identify and eliminate systematic discrimination and to redress the imbalances in the work force caused by past discrimination. Affirmative action was first enunciated as commission policy in 1979 and became operational in the 1979-80 fiscal year.

There are presently 16 affirmative action consultants located in the major centres across the country. For example, there are two such affirmative action consultants in Winnipeg. It is true that affirmative action has not enjoyed a great deal of success in signing agreements with employers in the past few years. Many employers have a negative perception of affirmative action based upon the American experience. Some employers, in addition, fear that by signing an agreement they will be admitting that there is presently something wrong with their hiring practices. This attitude neither helps the employer nor target group members who are being excluded from jobs. Finally, there is a group of employers who simply feel that any government intervention in business is unacceptable. For these and many other reasons, affirmative action has had a difficult introductory period.

The hon. member has asked if we should not now consider a mandatory affirmative action program utilizing the contract compliance mechanism. In response, let me say that the minister is not happy with the voluntary program because it does not seem to meet the needs of disadvantaged workers nor the needs of the employer community. He is, therefore, determined to make changes in the approach being used, and it is for this reason that they are presently reviewing the affirmative action strategy and are considering various options. They will, of course, continue to consult with business and labour before taking a final decision in order to ensure that any new policy option will be workable.

With regard to the specific situation which has risen in Manitoba, the minister has now seen the memos. Mr. Lussier, Chairman of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission has been asked to investigate the situation and to provide the minister with a detailed report at the earliest possible time. If, in fact, the report shows that our officials were operating contrary to commission policy, the situation will be immediately rectified.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock.

At 10.27 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.