

*Private Members' Business*

Organizations that take advantage of and capitalize upon the rich composition of Canadian society will come out ahead. Organizations that are able to manage a diverse and dynamic workforce are bound to be more competitive in today's marketplace. Given demographic trends we cannot afford to overlook any under-utilized source of talent.

By the year 2000, the very time when we will experience a severe skill shortage because of an aging workforce, two-thirds of the entrants to the Canadian labour market will be women, visible minorities, aboriginal peoples, and persons with disabilities. This is the face of the future workforce and we must integrate them, whether the Reform Party likes it or not.

In conclusion, I do not believe that government should base their policies on the media coverage of the backlash against employment equity. In reality there are no losers under Canada's employment equity legislation. There are only winners when each and every citizen is given a fair chance for employment and then given equal opportunity to advance within the organization.

Ensuring that qualified minorities are not discriminated against is a worthwhile and noble goal. As a nation of caring, compassionate people dedicated to dignity and justice, we are determined to build a country where all Canadians can take pride in employment and their contribution to the community.

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure indeed today to rise to speak on the motion presented by my colleague from North Vancouver. I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech, which outlined the purpose of his motion.

The motion deals with a sensitive issue, the practice of employment equity. I am pleased to have seconded the motion and to support the motion, which calls for the immediate end to employment equity programs and the end to the inclusion of employment equity requirements on employment or training forms. Such requirements encourage candidate selection to be made on the basis of sex or ethnic origin rather than merit and as a result foster a sense of resentment among applicants. The whole concept of employment equity is flawed. As my colleague pointed out, it advocates the hiring of individuals based on designations, not merit.

The hon. member for Fraser Valley West also expressed it quite well. He said the concept of employment equity will subordinate the principle of merit to the politics of race and of gender. This is made clear by a number of factors, one being the sense of dissatisfaction with employment equity by those it claims to help.

Members of targeted groups who supposedly benefit from employment equity face two difficult questions, the first from themselves. Were they chosen for the position they now hold

because of the target group they belong to, or was their hiring based on merit? It is a question that is always there.

• (1820)

Second, there is a question from their colleagues. Do the individuals they work with have doubts about whether they were hired based on the fact that they are a member of a visible minority or a member of a disadvantaged group, or did they truly deserve the position?

This brings me to my second point. When people in a workplace really do not know why they or their colleagues were hired, whether it was based on merit or because of a specific category to which they belong, it fosters a sense of inequality and divisiveness among co-workers. This sense of inequality, as a result of astute hiring practices and quota filling, can lead to a split in the workplace because they create an atmosphere of distrust and doubt. This does not make for a productive or a happy workplace.

I would like to tell a story that was told to me by a staff member of a member of Parliament on the Hill. She had a friend at university, a very bright individual and a member of a visible minority group, who often spoke out very strongly against employment equity programs. Many people questioned his position. They asked why he, one who could obviously benefit from such programs, was so vocally and so strongly against these programs. His reasons were that he did not know, and was afraid that he would not know, if he was hired based on his skills or his skin colour. His co-workers would not know either. This individual said he wanted to be judged solely on the basis of merit and on nothing else.

Indeed, even hon. members opposite have expressed similar views and have shared similar stories. The hon. member for Waterloo stated in committee, with regard to the government's employment equity legislation, that an individual from his own riding did not want people to think he got his job based on preferential treatment. This constituent was also speaking out against employment equity.

Looking at this concern from another point of view, from a point of view based on productivity in the workplace and from the employer's point of view, I would like to tell another story. This story was told to me personally by a gentleman who owns a fairly large business that he built from scratch in my constituency.

This gentleman's company bid on government contracts on a fairly regular basis. He had been very successful in winning these contracts over the years. He was expressing a deep concern to me that his company was no longer eligible to bid on these contracts. The reason was that he did not have the proper quota allocations within his company. More than 50 per cent of his employees were women. He had always hired a considerable number of women because they could do the job best. He had some members from visible minority groups. But his company could not successfully keep enough employees from the aborigi-