

procrastination and more delay. Delay is a key word because justice delayed is justice denied, and justice is being denied to all those groups that are suffering from discrimination in this country.

● (1630)

The Tories are paralysed with fear about doing the wrong thing. So they do nothing so as not to offend anyone. They are afraid to lose a seat or two. They are afraid to go to bat for minority groups. They are prepared to take on popular causes, but they are afraid to go to bat for the people who are suffering. We all know that consultation is important. It is a vital element in the legislative process. Governments should not take precipitous or hasty action for the sake of appearing decisive. That was the fatal flaw of the nine-month Tory Government. Neither should Governments let consultation be an end in itself. A balance must be struck, otherwise the consultative process becomes like molasses in the decision-making machinery of Government. It gums up the works and nothing gets done.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the serious concerns which my Party has with respect to this legislation. We will, of course, support the legislation because it will tidy up some of the language in the legislation which now exists. However, we will continue to press for full equality. We want to ensure that equality becomes a reality in the very near future. We disagree profoundly with the procedure which is being proposed by the Conservative Government. If it were truly interested and sincere about equality, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) would be in the House to listen, and the Government would take the definitive action which is so necessary.

I look forward to further discussions with respect to this legislation in committee. I am sure that other members of the Official Opposition will have more to say on Bill C-27.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour four years ago, as a relatively new and young Member of Parliament, to sit on an historic committee. That committee was the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada. That committee was charged with the responsibility of reviewing a proposed constitutional resolution and hearing not only witnesses with respect to the proposed Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but also the provinces and other concerned groups about the constitutional process.

I recall vividly the fact that witness after witness came before the committee—whether they were representatives of native people, minorities, women's groups, or the disabled—to urge the Government to strengthen the resolution which had been tabled in the House. That resolution was strengthened. The equality rights section of the Constitution was improved significantly.

The constitutional package came into effect on April 17, 1982. It was felt that Governments needed three years, until April 17 of this year, to bring their legislation into compliance with the provisions of Section 15, the section which deals with equality rights. We waited three years, but I would suggest

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that when this Government finally moved on January 31 it was a black day for human rights in Canada. What it constituted was a bitter betrayal of the hopes of women and minority groups in Canada who had hoped that the Government would take its responsibilities seriously, not simply to review legislation, but where the review showed that the legislation was in conflict with the fundamental principles of equality, that the Government would bring forward changes.

I would like deal briefly with the arguments which were made by the Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata). I appreciate that he is a new Member and that he was not present for some of the debates which took place subsequent to the passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As Members, we have been witness to the most extraordinary rewriting of history which this Chamber has probably ever seen. That Member stood and attacked the Government for refusing to move on issues of concern to minorities. He attacked the Government for listening to the majority and refusing to heed the concerns of minorities, including the disabled and the minority which is discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.

I would like to remind Members of what really happened and of the history of the Liberal Party after the passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The history of his Party, when it was in Government, was a history of explicitly and deliberately denying the claims to full equality for the groups which the Hon. Member for York South-Weston now stands up self-righteously to defend. What is the record? I would like to give the House a couple of examples.

A special parliamentary committee was struck to look into discrimination against the disabled. That committee tabled in the House a report which was entitled *Obstacles*. That report very eloquently documented the history of abuse and inequality. I would like to salute the members of that committee. In my view they did an outstanding job of bringing to the attention of Parliament and the Canadian people discrimination, both economic and social, against the physically and mentally disabled people of Canada.

That report was tabled in 1981. I would remind Members of the House that the Liberal Party was in Government from 1981 until 1984. I would ask the Hon. Member for York South-Weston—who has attacked the Conservatives for doing nothing to assist the disabled in the country—where was he and his Party when the disabled people said that it was time for action? For him to suggest that they were prepared to take action to remedy the historic injustices against the disabled, when they did nothing for three years after the tabling of the report, surely to goodness Canadian people must recognize that something is wrong.

The Hon. Member for York South-Weston said that this Government was copping out on human rights and fundamental justice. He accused the Government of listening to the views of the majority. Both of those criticisms, Mr. Speaker, may be well founded but, I recall vividly, as a member of the Justice Committee—and the Hon. Member suggested we should look at the records of the justice committee—hearing