

*Government Orders*

We need some help and this provides help, but it does not step on anyone to do it. I challenge the Reform Party to come up with facts to prove that it does. The facts will not bear its position out.

As a country we value diversity. We support our many communities as a source of social stability and economic strength. As individuals too many Canadians continue to face enormous barriers to employment which prevent them from achieving their full potential.

I have met with the disability groups. I have seen those people. I have spoken with them. It is all right to stand in the House of Commons and isolate oneself from that constituency, but sometimes one should go to the source. We as elected members have to go to the source, keep open minds and respond to those people rather than criticize them and stomp on any opportunities they might have.

It is ridiculous. We have to help those people. They have less than we do in terms of opportunities. As a disabled person mobility is a problem and the work environment can be a problem. Those are the things we have to work on.

If people live in high unemployment areas or in areas of extreme poverty as do some aboriginals, they are marginalized socially. They do not have a mode of transportation. There are many barriers facing them. Some are institutionalized; some are systemic. That is true. That is a fact. That is something we cannot deny and we have to face reality.

I spoke about an individual who has endured, who has worked many years on the land with one arm. The individual said to me: "My arm must be worth \$100,000". Any insurance company would say: "How can we put a value on the loss of one's arm or any extremity?" It would be putting a value on a life. It would be putting a value on the man's capacity to provide for his children so they can pursue and finish their education and his wife can be there to raise their children with him. That was not made available to that family. These are the kinds of situations that arise out of the inequities, the barriers, the obstacles.

In 1994 the Employment Equity Act annual report painted a depressing picture for people with disabilities, members of visible minorities, women and aboriginal people. Since 1991 employment has declined more severely for employees covered under the act than for employees in the Canadian economy.

In spite of an increase in the population of designated groups fewer of them found their way into the labour market. They are not a threat. Believe me, the jobs are safe. They just want an opportunity to do something, to make themselves independent.

Members opposite on a daily basis wail away about how people have become so dependent, are on welfare and are living off the system. Here is an opportunity for them to help those

people to integrate into the system, to be independent, to have self-respect, to have a job and to support their own families.

Members of designated groups still find themselves at the lowest end of the social and economic scale. Not only do they not have the opportunity, many of them are also the poorest. It is not correct that the wage gap between visible minority employees and other full time workers has widened for men and remains almost the same for women since 1987. There has not been that much movement.

I do not know why the intimidation. I do not know why the perverse, twisted language that strikes fear into the hearts of the average Canadian. It is so seductive to speak that way. It is so easy to use colourful, provocative gross language that overstates the case and sells it unfairly. That is not right; that should not be done. Let the facts speak for themselves. There is something seriously wrong when talented, educated women continue to be over represented in clerical, sales and service jobs but under-represented in upper management and technical jobs.

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How can we call ourselves a caring and passionate society when we deny people with disabilities accessibility and the dignity that comes with a job? It is a source of national shame that our first peoples account for only 1.04 per cent of the workforce, occupy the lowest paying jobs and are on the losing end of the wage gap when compared with other Canadians.

It is unacceptable that university educated aboriginal young people experience an unemployment rate twice that of their white male counterparts, considering the barriers that face them when they enter high school.

In some places I have visited there is a dropout rate in excess of 85 per cent. Those children who make it into the system, who make it through high school and who make it through university are in an alien, foreign environment. It is different. It is difficult. I have done it. I know. It is difficult for them. They need support. They do not need criticism, opposition and confrontation. Leaving employable people on the sidelines does us all a disservice. It damages individuals. It wastes enormous talent. It hinders our economy and diminishes society as a whole.

Employment equity is quite simply fairness in the distribution of jobs. Bill C-64 is designed to ensure that nobody is denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability. Inequality by comparison is a drag on our economy. Passive income support costs all Canadians, not the least of whom are the individuals affected. There is a pressing need for the legislation.

By the turn of the century two-thirds of entrants to the workforce will be from the four designated groups: women, aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities, and people with disabilities. The country needs the wealth of their talents. We cannot afford to overlook any segment of the population any longer.