

Government Orders

ination act, as Reform would have us believe. It is the Employment Equity Act.

• (1220)

Let me quote from the dictionary: equity; fairness. If one goes to the second definition, it says the application of the principles of justice. Equity; justice. Those are Canadian words. Those are words that Canadians have taken to their hearts and have identified now for decades as a fundamental of what this country is all about.

Let me go to the word equality: the state of being equal. It is not one better than the other, but equal. That too is a term that our society and our country has stood for not only at home but around this globe.

Our approach in the bill is founded on a human resources planning approach to workplace issues. It is founded on creating a climate that encourages diversity through real action, not empty rhetoric. It is founded on a compliance process that has been based on those best Canadian values of negotiation and co-operation.

It is founded on giving employers the tools, the information and the incentive to recognize the ability in everybody who comes forward and applies for employment, in everybody who is in their employ and is looking for opportunities to advance and to improve.

My colleagues on this side of the House have talked about how this system will work. We do not have to rely on speculation. This is not new legislation. With some minor changes in applying it to the public service, it is the same employment equity legislation that has been in place in Canada since 1987.

My colleagues have talked about employers who see the value in this legislation to do the right thing. These employers have spoken of the flexibility and realism that is the foundation of our approach.

I sat through weeks of hearings of the human rights committee where numerous employers' organizations came before us in support of the legislation. They were not in support of every detail of it. They asked for some changes and most have been made. Not every equity group approved of every detail in the legislation. They asked for some changes and some of those have been made.

In true Canadian spirit, we are trying to achieve a progressive goal for all Canadians, a goal that is good for our economy, good for our society and good for individuals within our Canadian society.

We have not, as always, done what everybody would have liked but we have reached the best accommodation possible of the many different interests involved.

[Translation]

We have taken a made in Canada approach to employment equity. Admittedly, there are problems, but we can find effective, sensible and user friendly ways of dealing with these problems. This means no quotas, no reverse discrimination and no arbitrary preferential treatment. This means creating a fair and rational workplace for all.

[English]

I ask the hon. members opposite to quit falling back on the tired slogans of American politics, to quit pretending that the Canadian way is the American way. It is not. Look to this country. Look to our reality. Look to a better future and more opportunity for all Canadians, not just the select few. Look to a solution that makes sense. That solution, I believe, is found in Bill C-64 and the continuation of employment equity in Canada.

• (1225)

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member who just made her presentation spent some time talking about discrimination in Canada, saying that members of the Reform Party deny that there is discrimination. I do not think one Reform member of Parliament could be found who would deny that there is discrimination and that it is not a problem. I do not deny it and I do not think any of my colleagues would deny it.

If discrimination finds its way into the workplace, as members of the Reform Party have said, it should be dealt with in a tough manner. We do not tolerate it and we must not tolerate it.

The member also gave statistics to show that legislation is needed. I present a few statistics and ask the member to respond to them. These are from the 1994 employment equity report. The report said that 570,000 people are currently regulated by the present Employment Equity Act. The member spoke about this not being new legislation, that there is an Employment Equity Act in place. Of this number 45.6 per cent are women. In the Canadian workforce about 45.9 per cent are female. The difference between those in the employment equity program and those outside is .3 per cent.

In total, women occupy 47 per cent of government jobs, while 47.3 per cent are available for work. Again, a .3 per cent difference. The civilian staff of the RCMP is 82.6 per cent female; Citizenship Canada, 74 per cent female; Transport Canada, 75 per cent male. What are we going to do in these departments? Are we going to make sure we get the right quotas, get rid of women in one department and get rid of men in the other? What are we going to do?

The overall statistics in government and outside government show the employment equity program has very little effect.