

Statute Law Amendment Act

end hundreds, perhaps thousands, of minority groups and individuals came to Ottawa, at great expense, to make their views known to the Government. Hundreds and thousands of other individuals wrote to the Government on the various issues that this Bill addresses. The Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) indicated that he has met with a number of individuals and groups in his constituency.

I would like to follow up on the earlier question that was asked of him and ask what he can tell those minority interest groups that are once again being asked to come before another committee. Perhaps on April 17, 1982 they thought that they were given a special privilege which others did not have and that some social equality was being undertaken. They assumed that on the proclamation date of April 17, 1982 that would come to be. What can he tell those groups when they are now invited by the Government to come back to repeat the same story they told the Government and Parliament only three years ago? How can we justify calling those groups in again when we heard that message loud and clear the first time?

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to answer that question. I believe the consultations which occurred previously were directed specifically to the general principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Those principles were not brought into effect, as far as equality rights are concerned, as of April 17, 1982; they will only come into effect on April 17, 1985. On April 17, 1985 you, I and all Members of the House will be able to tell those groups that at long last they do have the rights and freedoms on which they made their positions known in 1981 and 1982. Those rights will finally come to fruition.

At that time they were dealing with the general principles which I had always felt we had in our law. However, apparently we do not and will not until April 17 of this year. They came to make their views known on those general principles. At the same time, no doubt, they made known their views on particular issues and items of concern to them. Now, within the framework of a general principle that guarantees equality for all, they will have the right to put forward those views and have them shaped within that context and finally dealt with. Hopefully, they will all come away from the round of consultations which is about to commence very pleased and content that this is the country which we always thought it to be, a country where equality reigns and a country that we can all be very proud of.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-27, an Act to amend certain Acts having regard to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I was fortunate enough to have been a member of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons when Canada's Constitution was before it. At that time groups of handicapped persons appeared before that committee to argue for inclusion of their rights and for exclusion of discriminatory practices that had gone on in this country for very many years. I also sat as a member of the Justice Committee which was finally able to convince the then

Government to include prohibitions of discrimination against disabled individuals on all grounds whereas previously the only exclusion had been in the area of employment.

I was also a member of the special House of Commons Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped which produced a report entitled *Obstacles* which was tabled in the House. That report was highly praised by Members on all sides of the House and by disabled groups and individuals across the country. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this report has become something of a bible in terms of issues affecting the disabled community in countries across the world. I mention that for a number of reasons. In Bill C-27 the Government missed a golden opportunity finally to do something that would be of great benefit to the disabled and handicapped community in the country.

Other speakers have addressed issues of equality with respect to women's issues and others. I do not want to repeat those arguments except to say that I am in agreement with much of what has been said. In so far as the disabled are concerned, the Government not only missed an opportunity but appeared to be avoiding accepting any responsibility in this area.

I listened with great interest to the comments of my good friend, the Member for York East (Mr. Redway). I was associated with him before on the Board of Governors of Centennial College in Scarborough and know him very well. He was extolling the virtues of this particular piece of legislation, saying that magically on April 17 every Canadian will be in a position to enjoy every right that previously had been denied to them under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I am not as convinced as he apparently is.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, discrimination is a very subtle thing which is very difficult to prove. Simply by saying certain things in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms without having enforceable regulations to accompany them will not magically end the discrimination in several weeks' time when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms comes into full force and effect. I predict that it will not come into full force and effect until there have been many, many court challenges under the provisions of that charter. It will be a very expensive proposition for many groups which simply do not have the financial resources to press the case before the courts.

I express disappointment, not only on the contents of the Bill but also on the discussion paper which was tabled several weeks ago by the Minister of Justice entitled *Equality Issues in Federal Law*. When I took a look at the discussion points that were put forward by the Department of Justice with respect to disabilities, I found the terminology and language used in those sections to be quite offensive. Throughout the points that it raises, the Justice Department continues to perpetuate the myth that a disabled or handicapped person is somehow ill or sick. The Minister of Justice would be well advised to ask his officials in the Department to obtain some copies of the *Obstacles* report. I would be happy to send them a copy.