

*Adjournment Debate*

rates were also wider than historical averages, and widened to 2.5 per cent recently, reflecting our stronger economy and the attendant inflationary concerns.

Despite the significant rise in short-term rates, however, long-term rates have been relatively stable. This has resulted in the reversal late last year of the normally positive spread between short and long term interest rates. Currently long-term government bond rates are nearly 2.5 percentage points below rates paid on Treasury Bills, and our bond differentials with U.S. rates are below longer term average historical spreads. This can be interpreted as a sign of confidence among savers and investors, of whom there are many in the Hon. Member's constituency, in his affluent area of Ottawa, that inflation will be slowed in Canada and our expansion sustained.

Interest rate reductions are linked to growing demand for goods and services. Responsible fiscal and monetary management can ease pressures on capacity, and in the process reduce the deficit, inflation, and interest rates in a way that will sustain economic growth. These are the policies that will ultimately provide the greatest benefit to Canadian consumers. I am sure he will agree with all that.

PUBLIC SERVICE—VISIBLE  
MINORITIES—HIRING—GOVERNMENT'S  
POSITION—NATIVE PEOPLES AND VISIBLE MINORITIES

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to pursue the important issue I raised in Question Period a few weeks ago concerning the application of the merit principle as opposed to other standards in hiring within the Public Service.

When the Public Service was established decades ago, it was for one purpose. That was to protect the merit principle in hiring for people who would work for the Government of Canada and for the people of Canada. At that time, the merit principle meant one thing. It meant hiring people on the basis of what they could and how well they could do it, not who they knew and how well they knew them.

• (1805)

Now in the 1980s, it means something quite different. It means that we want to expand our conception of the

merit principle, getting rid of the often invisible and unconscious barriers that prevent certain groups of people in society from being considered only on their merits and not on any other standard.

We all know who these groups of people are. We know that the disabled are looked at for their disabilities, not for their abilities. We know that women are looked at as having limited capacities based on traditional roles and not on what they are really capable of. We know that visible minorities are not hired on the basis of their merit, ability, and capacity to contribute to the Public Service but on the basis of preconceptions of that of which they are capable. We know that native people in Canada face the same barriers.

We are looking now not at hiring on merit and getting rid of political favouritism in hiring, but hiring on true merit and getting rid of bias, prejudice and built-in characteristics in the system that automatically keeps certain people out.

I think we had to first face this different definition of the merit principle in the 1960s when suddenly bilingualism for the country and for the Public Service became an important issue. John Carson, who was then Chairman of the Public Service Commission, was often asked about whether this meant an abandonment of the merit principle. He was quite easily able to say, "No, it does not, but we are having is for some positions a new qualification. What we are doing is getting rid of barriers that have prevented Francophones in this country from being fully employed in their own Government".

The description was most aptly put by Mr. Carson's second in command, a woman, who was asked the same question as to whether bilingualism and requiring bilingualism now meant the abandonment of the merit principle. She quite simply said: "No, it doesn't. I can tell you this. If Archie Bunker and I sat down to apply the merit principle equally to a group of candidates, it is absolutely certain that we would both choose a different successful candidate". Those were the kinds of barriers and biases that she was talking about.

Those biases and barriers still operate to prevent women, disabled persons, visible minorities, and native people from being given equal consideration.