

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The House has heard the terms of the motion moved by the Hon. Minister of State for Housing. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): According to the provisions of Standing Order 26(1)(6), if 15 members rise in their place to object the motion is defeated. Shall the motion carry?

And fewer than 15 members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): There not being 15 members rising in objection to the motion, according to the provisions of Standing Order 26(1)(6) the motion is deemed to be carried.

Motion agreed to.

Ms. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, I have two questions for the minister who just spoke. I know he has a very sincere interest in this subject. During the course of his remarks he was speaking very positively, in fact, I would say he was bragging that the government has a number of policies including affirmative action in the public service. He also said at one point referring to descendants of the Chinese Canadian workers on the railway that all Canadians are participating in this country of ours.

I would like to ask him how he can justify the lack of action, the lack of results, in the so-called affirmative action in the public service in light of the figures which I have. The percentage of visible minority people in the general workforce is 6.3 per cent; the percentage of visible minority people working in the public service is only 1.58 per cent; and the target of the federal government for visible minorities was half way between, 3.2 per cent.

There is supposedly an affirmative action program to make sure that visible minority people have their fair share of jobs in our own public service. We are failing drastically. I would like him to explain this and to explain what the government is going to do about it, especially in view of the fact that there is a cut-back in public service jobs and it is going to get worse rather than better. If his colleague behind him would stop talking, I would be glad to present the next question.

The next question has to do with a question I raised this morning. How can he justify the goals of multiculturalism and the goals of this new department which he outlined when the government is cutting back on all funding for citizenship instruction and language training? Does he not think it is absolutely essential to help new immigrants who do not speak English or French and in fact to help many Canadians to become a part of mainstream Canada? That is absolutely essential and it is a federal government responsibility to provide citizenship training and language training so that people can get into Canadian society.

Mr. Redway: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague who I know has a sincere and deep interest in Canadians of all backgrounds. First of all, I do not want for a moment to say that the world is perfect in Canada. I have not been saying that. That is why we need a multiculturalism department and that is why we need other steps to assist in bringing about a much better world than we have at the moment.

Ms. Mitchell: What about the public service?

Mr. Redway: I was quiet for the hon. member and I hope that she will give me an opportunity to respond as well. What I am saying, first, is that prior to this government taking office there was no affirmative action program for visible minorities in the public service. There is now such a program and obviously it is pointing out exactly what many of us believed but about which we had no true evidence; that being that we were not perfect in the public service as far as its representation and its reflection of Canadian society was concerned. Now we have the mechanism in place to indicate to what extent the public service does reflect Canadian society and now we can move on to the steps to correct that. That is exactly what is happening. I might say that I have been laying a great deal of emphasis on that in my own department and hopefully before too long we will show some results.

Second, in respect of the question of cut-backs in funding, we all deplore cut-backs in funding of everything. I do not think anyone in this House enjoys seeing funding cut-backs not just on these programs but on a whole range of programs as the hon. member knows. If we did not have the fiscal problem that we do now, it