

*Employment Equity*

The Bill before us is a betrayal, a betrayal of the wishes and hopes of those Canadians who have been shut out for too long from employment. They have been denied a right to independent living. The door has been closed on those Canadians. The Government says that it is not prepared to put in the enforcement mechanisms which are necessary.

• (1200)

Rights that are not enforceable are not rights at all, as the committee has said. I hope that the Government will recognize that the committee which studied this question, heard representations and did the kind of consultation which the Government should have done, has seriously criticized this legislation. The committee has said that it falls short in a whole series of areas documented by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr Nystrom). It falls short in the area of enforcement mechanisms, in the area of contract compliance and in the area of resources available to implement this legislation. I say that the Government has displayed contempt for the consultation process, and one does not have to look any further than the legislation to see that that is very clear.

Yesterday 150 disabled people appeared in Parliament, many of whom had to be literally carried to their seats. They sought in good faith answers to serious questions which they have been asking for many, many years. When Hon. Members on that side of the House treated their concerns and questions, hopes and criticisms of this legislation with contempt, with indifference and with laughter, we on this side of the House felt that that was totally unacceptable.

**Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to say something about the two amendments put forward by the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand). I would like to consider particularly the matter of ensuring that the Bill not be made even weaker than it so clearly is in its truncated form which provides primarily for reporting on employment practices. I want to ensure that there are no clauses in the Bill that can be used in court challenges to undercut the effectiveness of the Government's intention to achieve employment equity or, as we suggested with the first motion put by the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom), the Government's intention to encourage and promote rather than achieve employment equity.

The two amendments before us relate to our concern for ensuring that the Bill is not flawed in one way or other. There has been comment on the matter of consultation between the Government and target groups, including the target group that was in Ottawa yesterday. We have all noted those criticisms.

I would like to suggest more particularly that, although there was a call for consultation with representatives of the workers, consultation with the union and, as this amendment before us now proposes, consultation with representatives of the target groups in the letter of the Bill, the consulting itself is

a weak form which this amendment does little enough to advance.

If the Government was really serious about achieving employment equity, as it claims to be in the language of the Bill, there would be provisions for negotiation. Instead, there is the recognition of workers who are not organized. This amendment would recognize representation from the target groups. However, consultation is not going to be adequate. We want to ensure that employers actually negotiate with their workers in ways that will ensure that employment equity is achieved.

I would like to suggest that workers' organizations have in fact been recognizing the need for action. I think particularly in terms of my own responsibilities for ethno-cultural communities, and particularly those in the visible minorities whose plight was dramatized in Toronto during the past year with a couple of reports describing discrimination in Toronto. In that case we saw evidence of racism in the employment practices of the employers of the City of Toronto.

I would like to recognize and place on the record the work the Ontario Federation of Labour has been doing in ensuring that workers and their organizations can deal with these issues, that workers will recognize the kinds of attitudes and practices that constitute racism and that workers and their organizations, negotiating committees and executives, will be equipped to take a leadership role in ensuring that employment equity is actually achieved in their workplaces. That action by the Ontario Federation of Labour is very important and indicates that workers are prepared to take their part in ensuring movement toward employment equity. The legislation is very weak, if all it talks about is consulting. There is need for genuine negotiation of these conditions.

I would like to note particularly the action which one provincial Government has taken to ensure genuine movement toward employment equity. The Manitoba Government negotiated with the representative of all of its employees and arrived at a plan through which, over a period of time, the public workforce of the Government of Manitoba will be recomposed in such a way that it will represent the population of the Province of Manitoba. It will take time, of course, to do that. Workers do have concerns about their own careers, seniority and so forth. I am sure it is in recognition of those needs that the negotiations between the New Democratic Government of Manitoba and the Union of Government Employees provides for a 20-year time line. The end result of that 20-year process of reconstituting the workforce of the Province of Manitoba is that it will truly reflect the population of the province through the inclusion in the workforce of women, native people, persons from visible minorities and the disabled.

That kind of determination on the part of a Government and its readiness and ability to negotiate with the representatives of its employees is, as far as I am concerned, exactly what is required if we are to have real progress toward employment equity. It is that kind of program for which this Bill does not