

*Employment Equity*

As recently as March 17 I made a statement pursuant to Standing Order 21 to call to the attention of the Government the fact that in 1984-85 the vast majority of disabled people hired by the Public Service Commission were hired on limited or term positions. When cut-backs come into effect, term positions are among the first to go, leaving many disabled as the first victims of unemployment. We cannot, therefore, look lightly upon this amendment.

We want to ensure that the Government is sensitized and forced to comply with the same standards with which it expects others to comply. Unfortunately, in addition to large parts of the Public Service, the House of Commons is not under the jurisdiction of this Bill. There is no provision to ensure that we practice employment equity in the House of Commons with regard to women, visible minorities, the handicapped, and native peoples.

We are addressing a serious matter. The Government should ensure that, by enshrining them in law, the provisions of this equity Act will apply to the Public Service. If another Minister, administration, or point of view comes along, these policies may be simply swept under the rug. There is no law to protect employment equity because it is simply a regulation at the present time. We are not confident that it is good enough to enforce it through regulation. It must be put into law.

We had the same argument with the Conservatives over the Constitution and the Charter of Rights. They argued that it was sufficient to leave it with British common law or tradition. We said that that was not good enough.

We have seen what happened to Japanese Canadians and what happened with the padlock laws. We have seen miscalculations and miscarriages of justice in the past. Therefore, this must be enshrined in law, in the Constitution, or in the Charter of Rights.

Now that it has been passed, our Conservative friends are hailing the Charter as part of their thinking. We had an awful battle trying to convince them that it is important to enshrine in law protection for people in order to secure their rights. Surely it is time to ensure that minority groups, the handicapped, native peoples, and women have guarantees by this time. Now that we have the guidance of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is time to put into effect the legislation which makes the Charter something other than merely a piece of paper to which people resort in order to ensure their rights.

The Government has left the Opposition with no recourse but to fight at every level because this legislation is too weak and does not cover enough. How do we expect the provinces to pass legislation applying to provincial Public Services when the federal Government is unwilling to apply it to its own Public service? We have proposed dozens of amendments to the Parliamentary Secretary for consideration and revision. We have told him that we want a comprehensive Bill which will meet the needs of the people.

Today disabled people came to the Hill at great expense, with some pain, and with tremendous effort in order to

express, in democratic fashion, their protest against the inadequacy of this Bill. They called it phoney and toothless. They are the ones who suffer. They do not want to wait for long processes to be undertaken only to discover that companies are not complying. That is not good enough.

**Mr. McDermid:** Where have you been for the last 20 years?

**Mr. de Corneille:** We must provide them with something which is concrete and immediate. My hon. colleague across the way in the Conservative Party asks what the Liberals did about this.

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**An Hon. Member:** We want to hear the truth. Don't lie.

**Mr. de Corneille:** He does not want to hear the answer. They are yelling and screaming over there. I have already cited what has been done. We had to fight them tooth and nail in order to get the Charter of Rights and Freedoms through to provide protection for these people and to ensure that at least they could go to court. The Conservative Party was kicking, screaming, yelling, attacking the Chair, and mounting every kind of obstruction to prevent the Charter of Rights and Freedoms from going through and to prevent the handicapped from having their protection and rights, at least in court. It is about time the Government straightened this out and came up with a Bill which shows its good faith and puts some action behind its pious words.

● (1550)

**Mr. Neil Young (Beaches):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-62 purports to deal with employment equity. As you have heard from members of my Party, it does no such thing. One aspect of the Bill, which has given rise to this motion, points out one of its major weaknesses. The Bill excludes Government Departments from the protections this Bill claims to give minority groups. I will return to that, but I specifically want to address the inequities in this Bill as they affect disabled Canadians. They are really severe. This is especially so in light of all the things we in this Party, organizations of the disabled and individuals across the country have been saying to Governments at the federal level over the years, and particularly since 1980. It was then that the former Liberal Government established the special task force on issues concerning the disabled in preparation for the International Year of the Disabled. It was recognized very quickly that the key issue—in fact it was named as such by the UN—was going to be independent living for disabled persons. This Bill does not even touch on that key area.

As weak as the Bill is, including the fact that it has specifically excluded Government Departments from its coverage, we are not even practising what we preach. In other words, despite the recommendations made in the report *Obstacles*, in the Abella Report and by organizations of the disabled over the years, Parliament itself is not even prepared to give leadership in this area.