

Government Orders

The target set for employment equity in the Public Service is 3.1 per cent when the work force availability for visible minority workers is 6.3 per cent. I do not want to see the Department of Multiculturalism become some sort of ghetto, with the government feeling that the department must at least have some visible minority staff, but the rest of the Public Service need not. My point is that visible minorities, women, and visible minority women, should be well represented in upper level jobs throughout the Public Service.

I wonder when the government is going to do something about employment equity and about language training. I brought these two issues up before in the House, but there has been no action on the part of the government in these areas. I will continue to make these my priorities.

The Canadian Ethnocultural Council's analysis of the operation of the Employment Equity Act shows that employers covered by the act have made little progress in terms of the hiring of visible minority workers. According to the Department of Employment and Immigration, the labour force participation for visible minority members is 6.3 per cent. In the majority of firms examined by the CEC, visible minorities represented far less than 6.3 per cent of the employees of the firms. Visible minority workers were concentrated in the semi-skilled, manual and clerical occupational categories. In other words, they were among the lowest paid.

I have made public statements about the need for mandatory, enforced employment equity. I have questioned ministers in committee about mandatory enforced employment equity, and I have written letters about it. The only answer I have from the government is an indication that it seemed to think the employment equity legislation is working. Well, it has obviously never tried to use it. The government is so completely unrepresentative of the visible minority population it cannot begin to understand how to combat systemic discrimination. We must deal with systemic discrimination with effective measures such as mandatory enforced employment equity, with goals and with timetables. Voluntary compliance just does not work.

We need a comprehensive, universal system of language training for all adult immigrants, no matter what their immigration class. Access must be guaranteed to all immigrants by the provision of adequate training allowance, and child care. Special outreach programs should be developed to inform immigrant women locked into job ghettos of such a program. Without economic equality and without basic language skills, immigrant women and visible minority women do not have much of a chance in our society.

I hope the new Department of Multiculturalism will not exist just for a show, but that this government is actually prepared to listen to the ethnocultural communities and immigrant and visible minority women.

The New Democratic Party has long advocated the setting up of a Department of Multiculturalism. I might add that there are other New Democratic Party policies that the government would do well to heed. One is enforced mandatory employment equity with goals and timetables for women and visible minority members.

I do support this bill to found a new Department of Multiculturalism, as long as the government understands that this is only a first step and not the only step in creating a society that is truly fair and respectful of all of the ethno-cultural communities of Canada.

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): On questions or comments, the Hon. Member for York South-Weston.

Mr. Nunziata: I would like to ask a few questions to the hon. member. The hon. member's surname is Black, and that would suggest that the origins of that name are British?

Ms. Black: Scottish.

Mr. Nunziata: Is the hon. member part of the multicultural community in Canada? I would also like her opinion on what she believes Canadians think about multiculturalism and what it means to Canadians generally.

Would she agree with me when I say that multiculturalism has come to mean that if you have origins other than French or English then you are part of the multicultural community and therefore you are ethnic. That appears to be the case, in my view. I would like to ask the member to comment generally in that regard.