

Government Orders

which we can implement our policies more effectively as time goes on.

We realize though that progress must not hinder the success of Canadian business, which is so vital for creating jobs and opportunities Canadians need. This act seeks to provide this vital balance and contains provisions that will benefit not only employees, particularly those traditionally disadvantaged, but employers as well. As such, it represents a win-win situation where everyone gains.

For this reason I will be supporting this legislation before the House and would encourage all members to do so.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before giving the floor to the hon. member for Lévis, I simply wish to remind the House that the period for questions and comments lasts five minutes.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say that the official opposition supports the legislation, even though we feel it does not go far enough—

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Dubé: —in spite of the protests made by the third party. At the same time, a member of that party alluded earlier to the government's double standards. In a sense I agree with him, but obviously not for the same reasons.

There are the following points. First, the government introduces legislation like this one, which is in general very praiseworthy and, at the same time, it passes other legislation, including one piece of legislation last year, suspending job security in the public service for three years. Administratively, they will cut 45,000 jobs over this period, and yet, when it comes to employment equity for women, for example, in the public service, it seems to me that a government should first set the example itself, before it asks business to do something.

It should be beyond reproach in this regard. In fact, we can see, and all the statistics indicate, that no progress has been made in the federal public service; nothing has changed. Pay equity is in the order of 72 per cent. Even for jobs requiring the same qualifications, women were paid less than men. Women are in lower paying jobs, because these jobs are lower down the ladder.

With the cuts and the legislation ending job security, there was the phenomenon of voluntary departures, buy-outs. In cutting other positions, a discretionary formula was used, and guess by whom, by the managers of the various government services. The vast majority of the positions involved are held by men, very few by women.

Can we call this a fair practice? This is what I mean when I talk about a double standard, it may be alright for the third party

to support it. It is all very well to make speeches in the House, to pass fine laws, but I know, coming from Quebec, that some people expected a lot from the Official Languages Act, for example, in promoting employment equity for francophones, those from Quebec, and even those from outside Quebec, and still nothing has happened.

Last year, a minister was obliged to issue directives to enforce a 20-year old law, and nothing has improved.

We will support this bill, but I have a question for the hon. member. In his opinion, since he is closer to the minister, are there any indications of a reversal of the double standard trend, that is, the trend of passing fine laws, but changing nothing? On the contrary, revisionist measures have been taken leading to regression and a return to the past by, for example, suspending job security in the public service.

What is preventing the government from passing antiscab legislation?

• (1320)

So, this is my question to the hon. member, who seems to have progressive ideas. I want him to reassure me as to the value of what he is saying, in terms of its impact on the government and on cabinet.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I remind the hon. member for St. Paul's that while he indicated to the Chair he would be splitting his time, if he wants to give his colleague the opportunity to conclude her intervention before the end of government orders his response should be brief.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I do want to allow my colleague that opportunity.

I thank the hon. member for his intervention and for reminding the House that the official opposition does support the bill. We appreciate that support. Obviously they recognize, as we do, that there are improvements that can be made in the way in which we do business in this country.

He raises some good points to the effect that the public service should be mindful of the laudable merits of this statute as it begins to apply to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the hon. member for his co-operation and I regret the period of question or comment is terminated.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to join with my colleagues on this side of the House in support of this important piece of legislation, which many disadvantaged Canadians have long dreamed of.