

Employment Equity

plus disabled Canadians come to Parliament Hill. In this very institution they found out that accommodation is not as great as it should be. There are only 10 places for wheelchairs in the galleries. Some people who were in wheelchairs had to be helped by the guards into seats in order for them to be able to watch the proceedings of this place. The Bill before us does not even include Parliament Hill. It also excludes the Public Service of Canada. Is it any wonder Beryl Potter interjected from the gallery today during Question Period to say that the Government had not done enough? Is it any wonder that she feels betrayed by her political Party? She has said publicly that she is a supporter of the Conservative Party. There are not washrooms on the same floor as the galleries to accommodate persons in wheelchairs. That is not reasonable accommodation. In the House of Commons, there are washrooms with doors that are not wide enough for people in wheelchairs to get into them. We do not have enough ramps, wide enough elevators or the facilities required.

● (1640)

Mr. Thacker: Why did you keep the Grits in for so many years?

Mr. Nystrom: That is a very good question. That excuse is wearing rather thin. That is the only excuse members of the Conservative Party have been able to come up with in the last 18 or 20 months. They blame everything on the Liberal Party.

Mr. Merrithew: Blame it on you.

Mr. Nystrom: I'm not a Liberal. The people of Canada voted for the Liberal Party just like they voted on September 4, 1984, for the Conservative Party. In fact, some of those disabled Canadians worked and organized campaigns for the Conservative Party of Canada, but when they come here they get snubbed by the Conservative Party of Canada. The Hon. Member from Alberta may laugh if he wants, but he is not a disabled Canadian. Perhaps he does not understand what some of those people go through.

Mr. Thacker: Why so late? Where were you in the last 15 years? You haven't said a word in 15 years.

Mr. Nystrom: Where were we? We were proposing amendments on behalf of disabled Canadians. Motion 11A contains their definition. In a smart—I had better watch my language in the House.

Mr. Gauthier: Smart-ass.

Mr. Nystrom: It was said by an Hon. Member back there. Perhaps old loose lips across the way can rise to say why he is saying no to disabled Canadians. He could tell us why he is saying no and why he is laughing at them.

I was just saying that today was a good example of why we need "reasonable accommodation" defined in law. Right here on Parliament Hill we do not have reasonable accommodation for disabled Canadians, and a Tory from Alberta laughs about

that. It is utterly disgusting and disgraceful that that could happen in this country in the 20th century.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just happened to be in the Chamber listening to the Hon. Member, who usually understands the appropriateness of relevancy in debate and obeys that particular constraint on us. He is making reference to the facilities of the precincts of the House of Commons. As the Hon. Member and you will know, Your Honour, the Board of Internal Economy is in control of the facilities and operates the budget for the House and is composed of representatives from the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party under the new arrangement. It seems to me that if the Hon. Member has complaints about the facilities in the House, he might use the appropriate opportunity to bring those complaints forward through his caucus representative and make sure that these matters are addressed in the proper forum.

The legislation is one thing, but the precincts of this place are a matter for the Board of Internal Economy. The Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) has long been a proponent of having all-Party representation on the Board of Internal Economy. Because the matter has not been raised as yet, to my knowledge, by the Hon. Member's Party except on the floor of the House of Commons, perhaps he will bring it to the attention of the proper forum so that we can take a legitimate look, through the chairmanship of the Speaker of the House, at the facilities here in the House of Commons and Parliament generally. As the Hon. Member will admit when he recommences his remarks, no one has been more forthcoming and supportive of facilities for the disabled than the Progressive Conservative Party which has shown leadership in this area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) has the floor.

Mr. Nystrom: I do not disagree with my colleague from Saskatchewan whatsoever. Obviously we need to try to improve this place through our Parties. However, the point I was making that is very relevant to the legislation is that this legislation does not pertain to Parliament Hill or to the federal Public Service. Handicapped groups have asked us to pass an amendment that would make this legislation pertain to Parliament Hill and the federal service. I think that my approach is a fairly relevant one to use in this debate.

I was pointing out that we saw a good example of why this legislation should be applicable to Parliament Hill today when over 100 handicapped people from across Canada came to Parliament Hill to demonstrate and to tell us why they wanted this Bill improved. I ask Members of the House to listen to disabled people and accept an amendment that would call for "reasonable accommodation" to be defined in the legislation and to make sure that this legislation is applicable to the 3,000 employees on Parliament Hill and the several thousand employees of the Public Service of Canada. I do not think that that is asking too much.