

Employment Equity

legitimate point of order in terms of the subject matter. The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Motion No. 12A is to ensure that there will be consultation—consultation with the groups which are affected by this toothless legislation. Because of the record of the Government which has refused to consult with representatives of the disabled—not only has it refused to consult but it has treated those representatives with utter contempt by making statements which are totally unfounded, with Members on the Government side looking up in the galleries and mocking the people who are there.

Some Hon. Members: Order!

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. Robinson: We on this side of the House find that kind of behaviour totally unacceptable.

Mr. McDermid: That is just not true!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order, please. Hon. Members may have noticed a certain reaction to certain comments. I ask all Members on all sides of the House to constrain their remarks, if possible, to the amendments which are before the House in the name of the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand).

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, once again we are talking about consultation. One of the concerns raised by the groups which were on the Hill yesterday was with respect to the fact that they had asked to speak and to meet with representatives of all political Parties. I was there. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom), was there. Many of my other colleagues were there. I know that some representatives of the Official Opposition were there.

Mr. Nystrom: But there were no Tories!

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, there was not a single Tory Member of Parliament—not one—who had the courtesy to attend. Not one Member of that gang of 211 had the courtesy to go outside and listen to the concerns of these people. That is why we in this Party are supporting, indeed, insisting on the passage of this amendment which requires consultation. We have seen the Government bring forward legislation which reflects consultation all right, but consultation with whom? The only people with whom the Government has consulted, apparently, on its employment equity legislation have been the Gang of Five, the manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce and its buddies in the Business Council on National Issues. We in this Party believe that the groups which are targetted by this employment equity legislation, women, native people, visible minorities and the disabled, deserve better. That is why we believe it is so fundamental that this amendment which requires consultation be supported.

Motion No. 14A deals with a concern that the Government may be attempting to escape from the provisions of this

legislation—weak as they are—by allowing other statutes to take precedence over the employment equity Bill. This amendment would ensure that the only statutory provisions which could override the employment equity legislation would be provisions which in fact are in conformity with the Canadian Human Rights Act. Surely, that is not an unreasonable suggestion.

Should Government members vote against this amendment what they would be suggesting, what they would be saying to the people of Canada, in particular those groups which are affected by this legislation, is that they are prepared to allow this Bill to be watered down by allowing other statutes to override it. It is weak enough already.

We talk about consultation. Had there been meaningful consultation this Bill, which has absolutely no teeth whatsoever, which requires only voluntary compliance, and from which the federal Government is exempt, would never have been brought forward. The Government embarked upon a process of consultation. I had the honour of serving as a member of the Special Committee on Equality Rights which considered employment equity legislation. Some Government members are not too happy with the recommendations of that committee; some of them even laugh at its recommendations. I would remind Hon. Members that the recommendations of that committee were unanimous. They were concurred in by all five Tory members of the committee. When they laugh at the recommendations which would put some teeth into employment equity legislation, they are laughing at their own colleagues. They are laughing at the Hon. Member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore (Mr. Boyer) who chaired the committee and who has been rather silent on this important legislation so far, despite the fact that the consultation process produced some very different suggestions.

The consultation process which we believe should be built into this legislation in fact resulted in the unanimous report which states that the Bill now before the House is fundamentally flawed because there is no enforcement mechanism whatsoever included in it. One of the recommendations of the committee was that representatives of the groups which are targetted by Bill C-62 be involved with management and labour in developing employment equity programs. Surely to goodness it is not unreasonable to suggest that the groups which are affected by this legislation have a hand in the enforcement of it. The committee unanimously stated that a principal shortcoming of Bill C-62 is the absence of enforcement mechanisms. It also stated that if successive reports show little or no progress toward equality of employment opportunities and benefits for the designated groups, then no sanctions are available.

Without an enforcement agency this proposal will simply not work. We will be right back here in three or five years with a stack of reports from employers clearly documenting their failure to make employment equity a reality. We will be shaking our heads and saying: "What do we do now?"