

Canada Fair Employment Practices Act

citizens. I know that there are some instances as in the case of security or otherwise where it might be unwise to apply all laws generally to the civil service of the country but, as I say, other things being equal I think that normally the crown should be bound by the same laws that are applied to citizens generally. In so far as the bill is concerned, I think that consideration might better be given to amending the Civil Service Act rather than the enactment of this particular legislation.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington South): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in this debate I must say at the outset that I shall be very brief in the remarks I wish to make. I feel that the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) was quite sincere in introducing Bill No. C-19 but he failed to convince me why such a bill is necessary at the present time. He even went so far as to say that he felt that discrimination did not exist in federal government employment and I wondered why he was bringing in this bill at this time.

I also believe that the federal government is living up to the Canada Fair Employment Practices Act all along the line. I know it is the duty of the unemployment insurance commission not to exercise discrimination on grounds of race, national origin, colour or religion in selecting people for jobs. I also realize that the Department of Public Works has inserted a clause in its contracts that takes care of this matter. The same clause is inserted in all supply contracts that are issued by the government. Therefore I am convinced that the Canada Fair Employment Practices Act is being followed very carefully by the federal government.

The province of Ontario has a similar act and I feel that other provinces, likewise, are doing a good job in promoting these fair employment practices. I am convinced, therefore, that there is equality of opportunity for employment without discrimination because of race, colour or creed in so far as the federal government is concerned in the employment of its people.

Briefly, in view of the fact that the hon. gentleman did not give sufficient reasons as to why he felt this bill should be introduced and, second, because I understand it is the intention of the government to revise the Civil Service Act, in which case this measure could be incorporated into the revision at that time; third, as I have said I am confident that the federal government now is providing equality of opportunity without discrimination of race, creed, colour and national origin; for these three reasons, Mr. Speaker, I find it impossible to vote for this bill.

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Mr. Murray Smith (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this bill I find myself, for the first time, in the position of wishing I had been in the house when the sponsor of this bill made his speech. Unfortunately, I was detained by a previous appointment and was not able to be here. I am sure that the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) introduced this bill with sincerity and that he was interested in putting forth his views on this legislation in the interests of all Canadians. Some of the previous speakers, to whom I have listened, have indicated that they did not believe a bill of this kind was necessary in this country. I would not commit myself completely to the statement that it was not necessary, nor would I commit myself completely in favour of this bill.

In the days when I was a student at the University of Manitoba I used to be a porter on the Canadian National Railways during the summer months. I make no bones about that fact. I like, whenever I am travelling on the trains, to keep in shape and to make beds as I used to do during my university career. During the time I spent as an employee of a crown corporation in this country I found that racial discrimination did exist, regardless of whether or not we like to talk about it and regardless of how we like to say it does not exist. Under the Canadian National Railway regulations a person who is hired as a porter can only be a porter, no matter how long he works for that company. A sleeping car conductor comes up through the ranks. He may be a dining car steward and then a sleeping car conductor. A brakeman can rise from the ranks and become a conductor. However, the porter on the train, under the Canadian National system, only has the advantage of seniority. He will never become a sleeping car conductor, a dining car steward or a conductor on the train.

Now there are those who will say that is not racial discrimination, but I say it is. Does the Canadian National Railways hire anyone who is of a dark colour to be anything but a porter? I would not attempt to answer the question, but I think those who say otherwise should answer it for me. This bill hits at racial discrimination, and any of us in this great country of ours who say that racial discrimination does not exist is not being sincere. I think it will always exist as long as you have human beings making up the intelligent population of the world. We have racial discrimination in this country