

be twice as good as the men with whom they were competing in order to get there in the first place. It is a sad fact that such a comment was probably true.

**Ms. Copps:** It is not too difficult. That is what Charlotte said.

**Mr. Cassidy:** The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) says that it was not too difficult, but it is a sad commentary on the loss of resources and human potential as a consequence of discrimination which still takes place.

The proposed amendment has been developed carefully and thoughtfully by the Coalition of Provincial Organizations for the Handicapped. They have given some thought to it, and I believe it is a reasonable proposal. Instead, we are told that this will be dealt with in the regulations.

Furthermore, the Government's document dealing with what the regulations might say does not speak to that question at all. We are basically left to trust the Government on this particular question. I have no grief for the former Government with respect to this issue because the only thing worse than this particular Bill on employment equity is having no Bill on employment equity. It is a sad fact that the previous Government did not even try introducing legislation in this particular area. However, now it is being done and surely it is possible to do it right. It does not necessarily mean that we can cross all the "t's" and dot all the "i's". I am sure there will be some experimentation, evolution and development in this particular area.

● (1740)

I read the very excellent report called *Obstacles*, which was put together by a House of Commons committee over the course of the last three and a half to four years, with a great deal of interest because I thought it was one of the most thoughtful and constructive documents at a parliamentary level or otherwise in terms of what needs to be done in public policy with respect to the physically handicapped. In that report—and I do not have the citation in front of me—the concept of reasonable accommodation recognized that different people have different needs and employers should not discriminate against someone because in order to do their job they have to have some instrument to help them. Employers, unfortunately, have been very obtuse about this. For example, it would be extremely difficult to work at a lathe, which is designed for a man of a minimum height of five-foot-six or five-foot-seven, if one is a woman and less than five-foot-six, unless she uses a small platform to enable her to reach the required height. Yet, because that platform would interfere with the sweepers, something as simple as that is resisted by the foreman and senior management because it disrupts the way things are done.

"Reasonable accommodation", in many cases, is as simple as putting down a small platform so a person of either sex who happens to be short would be able to work at a lathe. I have worked at a lathe. I know that the work, while demanding, is

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not physically so exhausting that it cannot be done by a wide variety of people. One does not have to be a 200-pound male in order to do the kind of work which is done at a lathe with the increasing use of computer controls, numerical control and that kind of thing. So why the devil would the Government resist a provision to ensure that in federally regulated businesses there is reasonable accommodation in that particular area?

I would like to say that I think the Government is hypocritical on this issue as it is on so many other aspects of the question of employment equity. I suggested earlier that this Bill would probably be just as useful in delaying equity as it would be to advance it. It gives us numbers and nothing more. It asks employers to comment or report, and then relies on public opinion. For God's sake, we know what public opinion says in terms of employment equity. The people of Canada want it. There is something wrong in the structure of our society when employers in the private sector, the people who own capital in many cases, are not prepared to implement what the people of Canada want.

I would like to say that when we get to the kind of economic democracy which I would like to see in our country, we would be in a position where working people would be involved directly in making those kinds of decisions rather than having arbitrary and thoughtless decisions made on their behalf by those persons who happen to be the managers or owners of capital. I note as well that what is regrettable about our society is that in certain cases the people who are the owners or managers of capital will be very busy in their private lives working for the Diabetes Foundation or for some other group which raises funds for some particular critical and disabling disease, but they will not see the inconsistency between that and the fact that at the workplace the company for which they are responsible in setting policy does things which involve systematic discrimination against people who are physically handicapped.

The reason we bring in laws in this particular area is that we now have generations of experience which indicates that of its own volition, the private sector, whatever other benefits or costs it may have, has been prepared to do those things voluntarily. One of the reasons, quite simply, is that the private sector wants a level playing field. It asks why it should spend \$5,000 to ensure that a job will be available for a particular handicapped person when the company down the street is not required to do the same thing. When we put in a definition of "reasonable accommodation" which covers everyone, we create that kind of level playing field.

So I appeal to the Government in the kind of a language which perhaps it can understand, because we are hearing it from the business community, to create a level playing field and ensure that all private sector employers are covered by Bill C-62 so that they will be required to provide reasonable accommodation rather than possibly disadvantaging one employer who wants to do justice and eliminate systemic discrimination while the employer down the street does not.