

Statute Law Amendment Act

in this country are concerned. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that that announcement had to do not only with the rights of women but also took into account the rights of visible minorities, the disabled and native people. It provided for equality of opportunity for all of those groups in hiring, training, promotion and in pay and provided that this new policy which was announced by the Minister would apply to the federal Public Service, to federal Crown Corporations, to all industries which are regulated by the federal Government and to all businesses doing business and having contracts with the federal Government worth over \$200,000. That took into account and affected some one million employees in this country.

So it is not as if nothing has been done. It is not as if this Bill is the only initiative which the Government is taking with respect to the question of equality rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This Bill is only one of many initiatives the Government is taking and has been taking. Another initiative in which I have been involved in particular is Bill C-18 which amends the Criminal Code. This Bill has been part of extensive hearings by the Standing Committee of this House on Justice and Legal Affairs for a number of months and represents a great many amendments to the Criminal Code. In particular, the committee deals with the question of writs of assistance. For some reason or other, although that Bill was introduced in the House prior to the Christmas recess, we are still dealing with it. Obviously, there were great numbers of people who were interested in making submissions to the committee on that point. I think that in itself is a good indication that people across this country want to be heard and consulted. They do not want to consider that they have already been consulted on these issues; they want their voice heard whenever a subject of this sort is raised. I am sure that they are going to come out in large numbers to meet the special committee dealing with this subject. I am sure they are going to have some very important things to say and that their words will be heeded. I am also sure there will be recommendations forthcoming from that committee which will be helpful to this House in formulating the proper types of amendments to the legislation which will finally deal with these subjects, hopefully once and for all.

Another point which many Hon. Members of the Opposition have raised has to do with age discrimination and the whole question of the compulsory retirement age. That is also a very significant and important aspect and one which is certainly not clear cut. I do not believe any Hon. Members of this House would really suggest that there is a clear-cut answer which everyone in this country would rally to and support right at this present time.

I remember personally, Mr. Speaker, a few short years ago, as the mayor of a major municipality in this country, dealing with this issue with a member of our own fire department. He was a man who came up to retirement age not only under the terms of a pension plan but under the terms of a collective agreement with the firefighters' association. He wanted to carry on beyond the mandatory retirement age but was opposed in that wish by the trade union of which he had long

been a member. That was quite understandable. The union had legitimate reasons for opposing this man carrying on beyond the mandatory retirement age.

On the other hand, all of us know good and legitimate reasons why people should carry on beyond those now mandatory retirement ages. The question is not clear cut, Mr. Speaker. There are strong arguments on both sides. That is a question with which, I am sure, the special committee will be dealing and will have many submissions on.

There are a vast array of other issues as well. If one looks at the number of subjects which are being dealt with by the special committee in its consultations, one finds it involves a vast array of subjects other than the very limited ones which have been raised by Hon. Members of the Opposition to date. For example, the question of disability as it applies to the Armed Forces; immigration; voting; unemployment insurance; the question of sexual orientation; citizenship and whether rights can be restricted to Canadian citizens or should apply to all Canadian residents.

● (1220)

That in particular is a very controversial subject. As recently as this past weekend I had people in my own constituency suggesting to me that we should be restricting old age security payments to citizens of this country. It is items such as this which are certainly not clear cut and need a complete public airing. That is what the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs is going to be dealing with and I am sure we are all going to benefit by it.

Having said all that, I want to reiterate that this is not the only piece of legislation the Government has introduced so far dealing with the subject of rights and freedoms, and it will not be the last. We have this Bill, C-27. Then there is Bill C-18. There is already an amendment to the Indian Act which the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) has introduced. There will be amendments to the Combines Investigation Act, Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act, just to name a very few, which will have an impact on this whole issue.

The most important thing of all is the fact that we will on April 17 finally have those equality rights enshrined in the laws of this country, rights that we do not have at the present time. The general principles will be enshrined and we may want to go beyond those general principles. We may want to extend those rights even further. I think that is really what the members of the Opposition are talking about. They are not talking about bringing things into line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; they are really talking about possibly going beyond the base limit that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides. I think those are the things that we are going to be dealing with in the near future when the subcommittee reports, and they will be very important issues.

Having said all that, I think all of us as Canadians should be looking forward with great anticipation and rejoicing to the dawning of April 17, 1985 when finally, once and for all, we have these equality rights enshrined in the law of this land.