

*Equality Rights*

**Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** The condition for employment is not whether you are homosexual, Liberal or Conservative.

**Mr. Cassidy:** Exactly.

**Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** It is a question of whether you can do the job.

**Ms. Copps:** That's right.

**Mr. Cassidy:** That's what the motion says.

**Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** However, to legislate that homosexuals are entitled to 5 per cent of the employment is a crock of cow dung from the Gaspé. The Canadian population is not looking to its Government to protect a homosexual society because it is going nowhere. We will allow homosexuals in the bedrooms of the nation, but let us never allow them into our Armed Forces or the RCMP. We will work with them so that they can remain silent.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Ferland (Portneuf):** Madam Speaker, I rise tonight on this amendment, and since the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) knows our rules, he knows I will make sure that I kill the motion. What the Hon. Member for Burnaby is asking actually is that the Canadian Human Rights Act be amended to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, the Canadian Human Rights Act is undergoing a complete review, the results of which should be known very soon. We are all willing to recognize, I am sure, that the Act offers complete human rights protection in the areas of federal jurisdiction. This issue is among those being looked at in the review process. I feel that we should wait for the results of that review before we consider the steps that this motion would force us to take.

This Government has always been concerned with human rights, and before I resume my comments on the motion, I would like to refer to the commendable role played historically by the Progressive Conservative Party in that area, and this should be pointed out in the present context. Some 25 years ago, when the Hon. John G. Diefenbaker was Prime Minister, the enacting of the Canadian Human Rights Bill was a major step in the history of human rights in Canada, being the first attempt by a Canadian Government to consolidate and guarantee the basic rights of all Canadians. Since then, the Progressive Conservative Party has supported the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Freedoms and Liberties, both of which are in line with our tradition of protecting the basic human rights in Canada. However, none of those documents that are so important in this country's history was prepared or enacted overnight. They all had to go through a process of in-depth examination before they could be voted on, so they would offer the most effective and appropriate means of attaining each and every major objective set for Canadians. The same applies to the matter at hand.

The Government already has defined its position in *Toward Equality*, which is this Government's response to the 85 recommendations made by the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights and its report entitled *Equality for All*. It is stated in *Towards Equality* that "the Government will take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that sexual orientation is a prohibited ground of discrimination in relation to all areas of federal jurisdiction". That commitment is in perfect harmony with this Government's established policy on equality and social justice. The present Government is firmly resolved to guarantee equality and social justice for all Canadians so that each and everyone will be able to fully realize his or her unique and personal potential.

Madam Speaker, although the present Government has not been in power for very long, it has made remarkable progress in the field of human rights, equality and social justice. The Government of Canada recently adopted amending legislation to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which was the culmination of a review of over 1,000 federal Acts made for the purpose of ensuring their conformity with the Charter. More than 50 Acts were amended to make them compatible with the Charter. Under this particular legislation, the Canadian Human Rights Act was amended to improve mechanisms for protecting human rights. There is no doubt that this Government is determined to maintain and improve the effectiveness of the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Commission in order to further minimize and attempt to eliminate discrimination in the areas mentioned in the Act.

Madam Speaker, I wonder whether this is the right time to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in response to the motion presented today, since the Government is currently examining this question as part of a full review of the Canadian Human Rights Act. Couldn't we wait for the results of this review before determining whether we should add separately any prohibited grounds of discrimination to the Act?

Madam Speaker, the present Government has made a commitment to ensure that sexual orientation constitutes a prohibited ground of discrimination in all areas under federal jurisdiction, and it has reiterated its commitment with respect to equality and social justice. The Government firmly believes in the principle of equal opportunity, and it continues to demonstrate that belief. The merit principle continues to govern access to employment in the federal public service. Thus, sexual orientation usually is not a job criterion.

The present Government has recognized that the application of this principle should be expanded and that sexual orientation has no connection with a person's ability to perform his or her duties or to use services or facilities.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** Order, please. I am sorry but I have to interrupt the Hon. Member. The hour allotted to the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

Pursuant to Standing Order 42(1), this item will be dropped from the Order Paper.