

Employment Equity

are unlikely to apply. It is as if the Government has looked only at voluntary measures. If this law is not applied to the principle of submitting these plans for revision, then there is no point in having them. If the Human Rights Commission cannot access employers' plans then it will be unable to assess whether the measures planned by the employer are adequate and, indeed, whether the plans have been implemented.

The other part of the farce is that if the plans are not implemented, then nothing happens. All one has to say is that the plans have been drawn up. If they do not have a set of plans, they can be fined, but who knows what they have if the plans are filed away in drawers? At least the plans should have to be submitted somewhere so someone knows they exist. They should be sent to the Employment and Immigration offices so that it may be determined if they are really targeting the population and they need to be viewed in light of the statistics which are being undertaken at this point.

● (1510)

We had to fight hard enough to get StatsCanada to continue so that we will know where we are at and can take a good look at the composition of our society. What is the point of doing that if we are not going to apply the findings? I think this amendment is only an intelligent progression that would enable the law to be applied in its entirety.

I would like to suggest that not only should the plans be retained by the employer at the employer's principal place of residence in Canada for a period of three years, but as well that they be communicated to the employees and any existing bargaining agent, and further that they be made available to the Human Rights Commission on request. I would like very much to support my colleague's amendment in this regard.

There is no doubt that both the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Commissioner, Mr. Gordon Fairweather, feel equally strongly that this amendment is a necessity if we want to measure progress in society in any way. I have said from the very beginning that the concept of this Bill could be very effective for the target groups, but there is no way that it will be effective if we continue with the farce of keeping secret the plans of action that one has undertaken.

I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary if he and the Minister have agreed to these amendments which make sound sense and would give the Bill some coherence and potential for action. I sincerely hope that they will take this into consideration and that the Government will support this amendment.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring one or two comments about this amendment to the Parliamentary Secretary and through him to the Minister. The game the Government intends to play is called: "I've got a secret". I must say that I am extremely disturbed over the Government's reluctance to allow any voluntary enforcement of goals and targets set by an employer, because these goals and targets will not in fact be communicated to employees

except in the better workplaces where the employer tries to be open about this process. The exact areas where employment equity is most needed are those areas in which there will be the least amount of information made available.

Suppose there was a law in this country indicating that we would wipe out discrimination against a particular religious group, but this was going to be done in stages. We would tell employers that they have to set goals for eliminating discrimination against that particular religious group but they are not to communicate those goals to the people who are affected—why I do not know. When we put it that way it sounds pretty awful, and the reason it sounds pretty awful is that it is pretty awful.

I would have thought that the Parliamentary Secretary, being himself a member of a group which has suffered a great deal of discrimination in the past, would have been sensitive to this issue and would, if he has not been given the authority to do so by his Minister, say that he himself personally endorses the change even though the Government is not prepared to go along with it. That is the kind of courage we would like to see displayed by that Parliamentary Secretary. We do not want to see him go along with something which will make useless this particular provision in the Bill.

Clause 5 of the Bill, which was inserted in response to a great deal of pressure during the course of the hearings, requires that an employer shall prepare a plan each year to set out the goals the employer intends to achieve in implementing employment equity as well as a timetable for implementing those goals. That would be a step forward, except that both the amendment put by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom), and the amendment which we are debating, put by the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand), relate to the salient point that there has to be a way by which the people affected have cognizance of what those goals and targets for implementation actually are. That is not the case in the Bill as it now stands.

The proposed amendments would simply ensure that in one way or other the information be communicated to employees. If there is a bargaining agent, the information should go to the bargaining agent. It can go to the employees by means of a company memorandum or by being posted on bulletin boards throughout the workplace and copies could be made available to those employees who are interested in receiving copies. There are different ways of making information available, and the Parliamentary Secretary knows very well that there are well established ways of communicating this kind of information in the workplace.

I draw to the attention of the Parliamentary Secretary the high-flying language of Clause 2, the purpose of the Bill, which indicates that the purpose is to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women and the other groups affected, by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the