

Supply

Mr. Strahl: Do you design programs based on need or on ethnicity?

From our point of view, we say people should be helped out based on need as individuals. There are some visible minorities, for example, in our program who would receive much help. There are others who would receive no help. It should be based on demonstrated need.

According to StatsCan, Japanese Canadians by ethnicity have the highest per capita income in Canada. Do you design programs to help someone from that background or do you design them based on need? We said government assistance programs should be designed based on need regardless of ethnicity, background or gender. We should not have programs and quotas.

I know the member does not like to admit it, but it was interesting during the leaders debate here in Ontario that Lyn McLeod, the Liberal leader for Ontario, mentioned that numerical targets are just quotas. That is why she is going to do away with numerical targets if a Liberal government is elected in Ontario. In that case she agrees with the Reform Party and most Canadians who say that numerical targets are not to be appreciated and will be eliminated under a Liberal government in Ontario.

The federal Liberals happen to agree with the provincial NDP on this one. The philosophical trend is interesting.

In any event, does one design government programs based on need or based on ethnicity?

• (1350)

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I just wish the members opposite would stop and think about what they are saying. First, everyone who has chosen to come to Canada to become a citizen or who is a landed immigrant is a Canadian. One does not hyphenate a Portuguese Canadian versus a Japanese Canadian. That is totally antithetical to the Canadian point of view.

Second, the reason for the targets, the goals, no matter what we want to call it, is because we have seen there has been uneven hiring, a systemic racism out there in terms of hiring practices. There needed to be some kind of mechanism to enable people to understand that after decades and decades of anti-discrimination laws nothing was moving. We certainly needed to have some form of mechanism so that those who were perpetually outside of the job stream could be included. It was not because they were low income versus high income. There are people who are low income who can end up being very high income earners. So do not give me that business. All one needs is an opportunity in life. If one is not given an opportunity to be hired because of the colour of one's skin then there is a reason why one is not getting a chance.

This kind of program and policy is to ensure that every Canadian, regardless of colour, creed, race, religion, language, sex or handicap, gets an opportunity.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I would say that all along the issue has been structural unemployment, systemic discrimination, the vital need for changes to the way one uses our unemployment insurance and the way programs are put into place, which have demonstrated that all people have not had the same kinds of opportunity. The world has changed dramatically. We need new jobs and new kinds of skills.

It may be the children of the very wealthy who may not get the jobs or the PhD who cannot find the opportunity, although the one who has the PhD has a much better chance of getting a job than those who are under-educated.

We have a target population because the system does not work without it. If the member finds that antithetical to his views that is just fine. The people of my riding and the people we represent realize we need a public policy to give people a helping hand. It is not gratuitous. It is good, constructive public policy.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I find the hon. member's comments very enlightening of the Liberals' position. It reminds me of what took place in British Columbia just before and during the Charlottetown accord. At that time the NDP government in British Columbia decided in its wisdom to promote the idea of Senate reform based on gender equality. It decided that if we were going to reform the Senate and make it elected, it would legislate an equal number of men and women senators. However it very quickly found out the people of British Columbia did not support that type of action.

Interestingly enough, one of the sitting women senators was the most outspoken against that. She found it personally demeaning that a government would consider legislating—

Ms. Clancy: Name her.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): If you must know, it was Senator Pat Carney. She said she could get elected to the Senate of Canada on her own merits not because some government took it upon itself to legislate equality.

• (1355)

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to make the point to the hon. member opposite that the Senate in this country is appointed not elected.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): I am well aware the Senate in this country is appointed because this government continues to fill the other place with its appointments. We are very well aware it is appointed.