

Employment Equity

target groups, whether they be women, the disabled, visible minorities or natives, will be subject to the same types of threats, exclusions and inhibitions with respect to promotions and hiring as they are subjected to in the private sector.

I suppose there is one argument for excluding members of the Public Service from the legislation. We have been over and over this story. It is that it will do the target groups no good, even within the Public Service, if all we are to do is determine their numbers without having a positive affirmative action program or employment equity program in place which seeks to achieve targets and which has firm timetables. To include the Public Service within the legislation, however limited it may be, will at least provide some degree of security. Future Governments will not be able to turn back the clock to beyond a point which is improved to some slight degree, even though the types of targets and timetables which we would desire are not there. Beyond that, we can at least expect that the process carried out by means of the Treasury Board guidelines will proceed to establish targets and timetables, even if the private sector is not subject to the same types of provisions.

Mr. Gerry Weiner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for stating the case as clearly and as fairly as he has. Certainly, we all understand and know the need for more participation at all levels of our society with respect to the full range of our potentiality. We will never really achieve our full potential as a nation until all of our citizens are brought into the vortex of all of our opportunities.

I am in somewhat of a dilemma. On the one hand I am told how the Bill about which I am so excited does not have enough teeth. On the other hand, in an area where we have already a stronger program in effect, that is, the federal guideline on affirmative action in the Public Service, the Hon. Member is now almost asking us to back-track and include it in a voluntary program. The Hon. Member will probably agree with the effectiveness of that program, certainly with respect to how all Canadians will recognize the need to make use of all of the energy of our society.

That being said, what I want to put on record is that I am totally against Motion No. 8. It has the effect of proposing that the Bill apply to all federal government departments and corporations as defined in the Financial Administration Act. Under Treasury Board direction, the employment equity program is mandatory. Therefore, this Bill excludes those departments and corporations. The Treasury Board has the authority under the Financial Administration Act to direct the personnel practices of these departments and corporations. The Treasury Board has directed departments and corporations to implement affirmative action since 1983. The March 8, 1985, announcement on employment equity reiterated that directive and clarified that the Public Service Affirmative Action Program was designed to achieve employment equity.

Under the Public Service Employment Equity Program, departments and corporations develop employment equity

plans. The Treasury Board examines and approves those plans annually, which plans are available to the public. Departments and corporations submit annual reports of their results to the Treasury Board. The Treasury Board prepares an annual report on results. The report is made public. Enforcement procedures operate in a manner similar to that for Bill C-62.

As the Canadian Human Rights Commission testified before the legislative committee, it has access to the employment equity plans and the results of departments and corporations and can initiate an investigation if necessary. I quote from the proceedings of the legislative committee on December 19, 1985, at which Mr. Cocksedge of the Canadian Human Rights Commission said:

—the Treasury Board has been fairly rigorous in the review of those plans. Some have been bounced back to the departments and the numbers significantly changed—there is a very clear accountability line.

The Hon. Member for Capilano (Mrs. Collins) asked the following question:

Just to be clear, you do have access both to the data and the action plans?

Mr. Cocksedge said yes.

● (1520)

Treasury Board employment equity directives apply to federal Departments and Departmental corporations listed as Schedules "A" and "B" in the Financial Administration Act. Bill C-62 does not apply to some Departments and corporations and I could deal a little further with that. However, all I really want to say at this point is that we want to see more visible minorities in highly visible positions of Government, not only in federal Government but in provincial and municipal Governments, as well as all of the agencies they serve, to say nothing of industry and commerce. It is the responsibility of this Government, the agencies and all other Governments to create that environment for opportunity.

We are fighting for the strength of Canada and its people, not the wealth of its resources. We are fighting for human resources above all. The message we are sending out loud and clear today is that with employment equity, with the program we are putting into effect and with the management of the 1983 federal Public Service guidelines which the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) and his consultative committee will continue to pursue, this program will have benefits and will bring about the participation of all the target groups. Therefore, I see no reason to weaken our existing position on the Public Service when my hon. friend is not even as sure as we are that the voluntary affirmative action program is all that Canadians are waiting for.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary. Because of the seriousness and importance of his remarks, I think it is worth while to put on record my views on this amendment which would strike out lines 13, 14 and 15 of Bill C-62, thereby including Government Departments in this Bill.