

Borrowing Authority Act

In order to give a bit of flavour with respect to what things look like in British Columbia I would like to read to Hon. Members a letter which was sent to me by one of my constituents, Ms. Trish McKeen. She is a young woman who lives at 3234 Vanness Avenue in Vancouver. She writes:

May I take a few moments to air my grievances about our present Conservative Government with you, my elected representative? I have grown increasingly dissatisfied, dismayed and angered since their assumption of power in Parliament.

I wish to speak of Canadian unemployment, in British Columbia in particular. I was working at my job, performing a routine task, when I heard of the election being called. I was also working when Brian Mulroney was sworn into office. A short while later I wasn't working.

Under the last provincial NDP government in B.C., and with help from my NDP MLA, I, a grade nine junior high school drop-out, was able to attend post-secondary educational institutions.

I lacked four years of public school, and after seven years of hard work in universities and colleges (and subsequently seven years' worth of Canada Student Loans) I became a professional. I studied engineering and petroleum chemistry and, at my discretion, filled out my academic background with heaping doses of oceanography.

I am really not sure what heaping doses of oceanography are. It is obviously an interesting course.

Before, and during, my studies I had worked as a veterinary assistant, small business manager, a chemical technologist and a dog groomer. Just before my graduation I went to work as a research assistant to an associate professor in the Dept. of Oceanography at the University of British Columbia.

There I applied and expanded my knowledge in chemistry, geochemistry, geology and geophysics. After several months I transferred as a research assistant to the Head of the Dept. of Oceanography, UBC. I was busy on that latter position when Brian Mulroney was sworn in.

● (1630)

Mr. McDermid: The Prime Minister.

Mr. Waddell: I am reading from a letter. It continues:

I have not worked in over a year now.

I was laid off from UBC in August 1984 due to lack of research funds. All did not seem hopeless though, as I received a job offer from a small consulting firm within a couple of months. I took the position, poor-paying as it was.

After 3½ months with the firm, and 3½ months of humiliation, degradation and abuse from my superiors (so much so that Employment and Immigration Canada called me in to make a report) I was "dismissed". Had I belonged to a union I could have protected myself; I did not.

Since February 1985 I have been seeking suitable work. By "suitable" I mean that I am not qualified as a waitress or telephone solicitor, having done neither in my life. In any case I have been to two interviews (for "professional" positions). Both were for government positions (one federal, one municipal). In each case my "overqualifications" were made very apparent to me and both governments expressed a fear of quickly losing me to something better. The municipal interview strongly impressed this point. The municipal agents asked me about my feelings towards field work.

Quite simply, I love field work. I told them just that but one of the MEN interviewing me told me that because I was a "girl" (exact word used) I was probably saying that I loved field work (there and then) but should I get the position I'd whimper and whine until I could get one of the MEN to do (it) for me (the field work) so I wouldn't have to physically exert myself and get dirty. This was my first taste of blatant sexual discrimination.

So she is in a Catch-22 situation. She cannot get lower paying jobs because she is over-qualified. She cannot get proper paying jobs because they are just not there. It is also evident what some people have to go through in job interviews in terms of the discrimination they face.

Shortly after that, Ms. McKeen was in a motor vehicle accident which made things more difficult for her. Her letter goes on to read:

Meanwhile, I have nearly exhausted my 18-months interest relief on my Canada Student Loan.

She has student loans for university which are now due.

My bank is getting restless. I have only until July 31st 1986, then my UI runs out. I have not had so much as a job offer, much less a job, and I have little to look forward to but welfare and creditors knocking on my door (very shortly). The only thing the Tories have done for me (as of January 1, 1986) is deduct another \$2 off each week of my unemployment benefits.

The new 1.5 per cent increase in personal income tax announced February 26, 1986 in the federal budget is effective July 1, 1986. It is little consolation to me that the "Tories" will only get the increased tax out of me for one month, should I still be unemployed. It is even less consolation that I cannot be taxed on welfare.

That is where she thinks she is heading.

Thank you for your loan of a "shoulder", to cry on. It is not crying as such, it's complaining and protesting. To use a famous line, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore."

She closes with a P.S. which states:

Tell Mikey Wilson not to spend my \$2 all in one place!

This is but one example of the frustration which is being felt out there. This letter sets out the case of a young woman who has gone back to school to get a good education, who has taken out student loans, and who tries for different jobs only to be told that she is over-qualified. She has experienced discrimination because she is a woman. However, she is realistic. There are hundreds of people such as this in British Columbia. We can now see why Senator Hébert is fasting down the hall. There is a type of quiet desperation here.

When one is in Ottawa it is hard to understand this. I thank this young woman for writing me this letter. I hope, when I get out of here, to go back to British Columbia to talk to her personally. I wish I could do miracles for her. I wish I could produce a job for her. I know I cannot. I can give her some leads with respect to government jobs. I can make some suggestions and so on. Most of those government make-work programs are pretty low paying jobs.

We have to get the economy moving again, especially in British Columbia. There is a real tragedy out there. We cannot have this type of wasted resources. I would approve of the Government borrowing money here if I thought it were going to do something important with it. I do not see any economic strategy on the part of the Government. Some two months ago it was going to create jobs in the oil industry, the so-called engine of economic growth. This month the direction seems to be consumer-led recovery through cheap oil prices. It is a complete contradiction. And then we hear about free trade. I say to the people of Canada, especially those in British Columbia, let us wait and see whether the Americans impose countervailing duties on our lumber products. We will see how good the Prime Minister's (Mr. Mulroney) relationship is with the Americans at that point.

My remarks have not been very encouraging for a Friday afternoon. However, I am an optimist by nature.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!