

Oral Questions

considering these matters should soon be reporting its recommendations to Cabinet, and we shall of course act as soon as possible.

INQUIRY WHEN GOVERNMENT WILL ACT

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I am not talking about amendments to the Official Languages Act, which is what the Minister was referring to. I am talking about existing programs this Government hesitates to support, whether it is someone who wants to make himself heard in French before the courts in Newfoundland or someone who wants to watch French television in Ontario, I want to ask the Government: When are you going to stand up and do something to help the minority groups in the provinces? I think that is pretty straightforward!

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at my hon. colleague's comments, because one of the first things we did as a Government was to clearly establish our full support for official languages policies in this country in October 1984, and this is a commitment we are meeting through substantial improvements in official languages programs across the country.

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● (1430)

[English]

THE DISABLED AND THE HANDICAPPED

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY BILL—REQUEST FOR AMENDMENTS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I think she is aware that today more than 100 disabled Canadians have come to Ottawa at considerable expense to tell Parliament they want positive changes in the Employment Equity Bill. Why did the Government not keep a promise that the Prime Minister's Office made to Beryl Potter and other disabled Canadians about three weeks ago and respond to three specific requests by disabled Canadians to strengthen the Employment Equity Bill before it came back to the House at report stage?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as you will be aware, Bill C-62 on employment equity is before the House this very day for debate. We are debating a number of items. With regard to the Hon. Member's question, the Right Hon. Prime Minister responded to Miss Beryl Potter by writing to her at some length regarding the legislation. He pointed out that, among other things, the Bill itself is the first piece of legislation ever brought before any Legislature in Canada dealing with employment equity and designed to improve the employment

opportunities of disabled persons, visible minorities, native people, and women.

Mr. Speaker: Supplementary question.

PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker—
[*Editor's Note: And a spectator in the gallery having interrupted.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Supplementary question.

Mr. Nystrom: I think she said it for me, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Then sit down.

Mr. Nystrom: Disabled Canadians have asked me to ask when the Government is going to move on its election promise to provide full-time permanent jobs in the federal Public Service for disabled Canadians? As of now, 75 per cent of its disabled workers are on term contracts.

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, we have had since 1983 an affirmative action program in the federal Public Service to help target groups, including the disabled. Each Department is required to develop and maintain non-discriminatory practices in employment. Reports have to be submitted to Treasury Board every six months for review to ensure that the affirmative action programs are functioning properly. To add to that, we have an advisory committee on the disabled at Treasury Board which meets three times a year to ensure that the program is proceeding as it should and full opportunities are given to employees.

Mr. Nystrom: Some 75 per cent are on term contracts.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Recently the Prime Minister personally met Beryl Potter and promised her and a number of other disabled people that he would personally review his Government's employment equity policy. That is why they are here demonstrating on the Hill today and that is why that voice has been crying out. There has been no answer, no reply to their phone calls—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the Hon. Member have a question?

Mr. de Corneille: Yes. My question is to ask the Minister what she has to say now to the hundreds of thousands of disabled Canadians who have called upon the Government to act, and to say that this Government's policy is toothless and phoney.