

Supply

nesses; employers, labour and designated groups, all welcomed the employment equity policy of the government.

It should be noted that the non-designated group continues to be hired and accounts for 55 per cent of the workforce according to the latest figures from Statistics Canada.

The Reform Party claims that employment equity is discriminatory. I counter that the bill explicitly aims to achieve equality. Equality is the antithesis of discrimination.

The purpose of this act "is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability". The purpose is clearly stated in clause 2 of Bill C-64. Therefore, I highly recommend that the Reform Party once more read the clause, if not the entire bill. In fact, discrimination in hiring and promotion is the very injustice the employment equity policy and the attendant legislation seek to redress.

The Reform Party moves that "this House recognize the equality of all Canadians by affirming that hiring and promotion be based solely on merit". I am pleased that at least on this score the Reform Party has it right. It pays once in a while for the Reform Party to heed government legislation and government advice.

Bill C-64, the employment equity legislation which is before the Chamber, specifically stipulates in clauses 6(b) and (c) that the obligation to implement employment equity does not require an employer to hire or promote unqualified persons and to ensure that merit is fulfilled.

The Reform Party claims that discriminatory employment practices could be more vigorously pursued on an individual case by case basis. That is the same type of logic which says, "We do not need more crime prevention; what we need is more police action after crimes are committed. Forget preventing crime, policing is all that counts. Catch the rascals and lock them up". In effect that is the logic of the Reform Party. However, I am pleased to say it is not the policy of the government. I am confident it is not the belief of the vast majority of Canadians.

• (1605)

I counter that a more appropriate approach where systemic barriers to fair hiring practices still exist would be by way of legislation and other government policy initiatives such as education and training as was indicated by the Reform Party. However, education and training alone are not enough.

Francine Arsenault, as chairwoman of the provincial organizations on the handicapped, once said:

Disabled Canadians and other disadvantaged groups have worked long and hard to improve our appalling rate of representation in Canada's workplace. We have tried education and awareness programs. We have tried fostering goodwill, yet

little has changed. The real causes of discrimination are not individuals but inflexible systems.

I pause here to call the minds and hearts of the Reform Party members to this observation in the hope that they will change their minds and hearts and withdraw the motion.

Employment equity legislation expresses the will of the government that equity in employment is a priority and a right for all Canadians qualified for a job, irrespective of race, gender, origin or presence of disability.

How ironic and unfortunate that the motion from the Reform Party has been introduced at this time when we are celebrating National Access Awareness Week. This is a week during which we specifically focus on the barriers which have prevented full participation of persons with disabilities in community life, including the workplace.

This is a week during which we reaffirm as a nation our belief in equality of opportunities and results for all. This is a week during which we resolve as a nation that we shall tear down the barriers that limit full participation of all persons and supply the necessary tools, including legislation, to facilitate equity in employment. I ask, where is the heart of the Reform Party?

I say to the Reform Party, fear not reverse discrimination, fear not employment equity policy, fear not employment equity legislation, but fear that equity in employment for women, visible minorities, First Nations people and persons with disabilities remains an elusive national dream.

In conclusion, Canada shall continue to aspire at all costs and work hard to realize this national dream.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not fools because they may not follow along with the presentation of my hon. colleague across the way.

A Gallup poll published in 1993 reflects on the comments this gentleman has made. It showed that 74 per cent of Canadians opposed government employment equity programs. The Ontario government advertised a job vacancy in a government newspaper with the explanation that the job competition was limited to the following employment equity designated groups. This is where Bill C-64 is going to take this country. The designated groups were aboriginal peoples, francophones, persons with disabilities, racial minorities and women. In other words, who is excluded? That was in a government advertisement. Is this where employment equity is going to take us?

I would like this member's comments on the following two studies. These studies were done in the labour market where it was clearly indicated that no discrimination took place. The first study was conducted by Arnold deSilva of the Economic Council of Canada. On page 34 of the study he concluded: "The evidence goes against the view that there is systematic discrimination against immigrants on the basis of colour". On page 37,