

Supply

want to make submissions to Your Honour and to the House concerning the very serious allegation raised by the hon. member for Saint John.

I would invite Your Honour to adjourn the matter until the Minister of Health is here and we can hear from her. I hope Your Honour will then take the matter under advisement and render a decision in due course.

The Speaker: Colleagues, this is a very serious matter and I take it as such.

The case was put to the House in a very succinct manner and I thank the hon. member for Saint John. I also thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

A minister of the crown is involved. With the permission of the House, I would like to have the minister enlighten us as to what happened. Perhaps it can be settled in that way, always keeping in mind that the hon. member's point of privilege will be dealt with in the House. However I would like the time to hear from the hon. minister when she returns, if that is agreeable.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I rise today to participate in this debate on the Reform Party's motion, it is to protect the aspirations and vested rights of women in Quebec and Canada. As we know, this motion concerns employment equity. It embodies—pardon me for being so blunt—every myth conveyed against employment equity.

The motion even refers to the concept of unnecessary, ineffective, costly, unpopular and discriminatory measures. Our colleagues from the Reform Party therefore conclude that this whole system should be abolished and replaced with a system based solely on merit. Before going any further, I take this opportunity to denounce the implication that employment equity target groups, namely women, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible or ethnic minorities, do not have as much merit as others.

Let us start with a definition. What is employment equity? In a document prepared by the Public Service Alliance of Canada for the 1992-93 regional conference of women, employment equity is defined as a process intended to bring about an equal distribution of workers who are too often refused training and promotion occupations within certain groups and areas. It added that, to be successful, employment initiatives must go beyond

mere recruiting to ensure an environment free from discriminatory practices at work.

It should also be pointed out that one can take one of two views on employment equity; one being centred on results and the other on equal opportunity. I like to think that our society is seeking a balanced mix of the two.

• (1510)

The Bloc Québécois fully supports the principle underlying the employment equity legislation. Recognition of the fact that entire segments of our society are basically denied equal access to decent jobs is crucial to the issue of women and poverty.

Women, as we have said time and time again, are poor. Women members of visible minority groups, aboriginal women and women with disabilities are even poorer. Is it necessary, in May 1995, to back this up with statistics? I think not, and I will spare the House the statistics today.

In the face of this problem of poverty, which all too often is chronic among women, one must realize that employment equity measures are not only necessary, but essential, in order to fight poverty. Only through economic equality will this problem be resolved, but except in rare cases, economic survival is dependent upon employment.

Let us now move to the heart of the matter. Before statistics can be compiled on women or aboriginal people in key positions or their promotion rate, members of the target groups mentioned designated in the legislation must first find jobs. In order for them to have access to jobs, measures have to be developed to foster equal employment opportunity, as job access is dependent upon certain preconditions.

For one thing, it may be useful to remind members that the mere existence of a sufficient number of available jobs is in itself a basic requirement. Some other conditions are the existence of full-time permanent jobs, a social infrastructure, adequate daycare and job training and access to non-traditional jobs. I will elaborate on the above points.

As I already mentioned, saying that a sufficient number of jobs are necessary to promote the access of women and of other groups to employment is a truism. Unfortunately, it is all too true that the current government has relegated this issue to the sidelines.

The Bloc Québécois has vehemently decried the shameful omission of job creation programs from the two Liberal budgets. In effect, apart from the national infrastructure program, this issue has been at a standstill. And the jobs which have been created, temporary for the most part, only target men. There is nothing available for women, nothing at all. We have already seen much better job access visions.

Here is an example of an invalid policy on job access. To have access to jobs, there must first be jobs available. That is the very foundation of the principle. For women or other groups desig-