

Employment Equity

opportunity to demonstrate how much they can help us grow, develop and become economically more viable.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, this amendment is simply designed to ensure that when the federal Government enacts legislation to apply to corporations in the federally regulated private sector—even if it is weak legislation like this—it should apply to the federal Government itself.

There have been many criticisms about the mechanisms in this Bill. For example, it does not ensure effective action but simply proposes to measure what has been done. It does not even require the setting and achieving of targets.

However, the Government has told us on many occasions that it intends to follow this course of action because one must walk softly in order to achieve affirmative action for women, the handicapped, the disabled, natives and minorities. If the Government is convinced that this is the proper policy, it seems to me that at the very least it should demonstrate its conviction by ensuring that the provisions of this Bill apply to federal Government Departments. We are not talking about an insignificant number of people.

[Translation]

There are about 250,000 people in the Canadian public service, and in many cases these are women, native people, disabled persons and members of minorities who are all supposed to be covered under Bill C-62.

Now then, if the Government really intended to show it is committed to affirmative action we might suppose that the Government would want to make sure that the measure applies equally to public service employees and to other private sector employees who come under federal Government jurisdiction. Such is not the case, unfortunately.

Mr. Speaker, in this respect perhaps I might quote some of the answers given to the Saskatchewan action committee on the status of women. During the last election campaign they sent the three Party leaders a questionnaire containing eleven questions concerning women.

[English]

In response to the the questionnaire from the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women the New Democratic Party talked about affirmative action in the Public Service in very explicit terms. I would like to put that on the record and then go to the promises made by the Conservatives and compare that with what they are doing in this particular case. We said, and I quote:

The New Democratic Party is committed to an aggressive affirmative program within federal Government departments and Crown corporations.

This was in response to a question addressed to each Party Leader which was:

Would you, as Prime Minister, implement and monitor for effectiveness, an aggressive affirmative action program with the Federal departments and Crown corporations?

The New Democratic Party said, and I quote:

The current affirmative action program in the Public Service must be strengthened and subject to rigorous monitoring. The mandate of the program must be expanded beyond its focus on women already in senior management positions. We would revise the guidelines of the program to make it relevant to the 95,000 clerks and secretaries in the Public Service by including measures such as bridging positions, comprehensive skills training and a non-traditional occupations program.

The affirmative action program for Francophones in the Public Service under the Official Languages Act resulted in equal representation for Francophones in all job categories, at all wages levels proportionate to their presence in the population—

If that is the case, why can the Government not do the same thing with respect to affirmative action for women, and in this debate I would extend that to the other groups covered by Bill C-62? We had indications that the Government saw results coming from the affirmative action program for women by the year 2000. We said that that was unacceptable and that is why we would seek to have the same results for women as have been achieved for Francophones in the civil service.

● (1620)

We called for the extension of mandatory affirmative action to Crown corporations as well as to companies in the private sector under federal jurisdiction. But all we have here is mandatory counting, nothing more. We called for the support of the establishment of targets for all affirmative action programs and stated that that should also apply to appointments to federal boards, commissions and agencies. Those were the promises the New Democrats were prepared to make and we have stood up for them during the course of this debate on Bill C-62.

The response to the questionnaire from the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was, and I quote:

The P.C. Party has had a long commitment to an effective affirmative action program within the federal Government to provide equal opportunity to women.

That is a laugh, given the way in which women are finding themselves turfed out of the Public Service because of the layoffs now taking place. The Prime Minister continued, and I quote:

Our Government will make sure that hiring and promotion practices give women the opportunities they deserve.

Women feel, Mr. Speaker, that they are getting the short end of the stick right now and I suppose they have to conclude that those are the opportunities they deserve as far as the Progressive Conservative Government is concerned. The Prime Minister continued:

We will carefully and regularly monitor those practices because too often in the past, women have not been considered, even though there are competent and capable women available.

We support the need for effective human resource planning within the federal bureaucracy which includes goals and objectives to achieve parity for women at all levels if Government operations commensurate with their skills and expectations. Numerical goals are one of several measures required. Training and retraining are others.

That policy left a fair amount to be desired. Nevertheless, it is a lot more explicit than what is occurring in Bill C-62. What it comes down to is that not only does Bill C-62 not involve setting goals and objectives that the now Prime Minister