

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the position taken by the Hon. Member with regard to the enforcement policies and provisions in Bill C-62. As reported at page 12454 of *Hansard* for yesterday, the Minister made the following statement:

The Government is committed to ensuring that employment equity becomes a reality. We intend to knock on the doors of employers who do not meet their responsibilities. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we will be knocking with a firm fist.

That confirms exactly what we have been saying. The Government only has pious hopes but no way of enforcing them, because there is no obligation on any employer to report progress. Would the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) tell us how he thinks the Minister will be able to knock on the doors of employers with a firm fist? What kind of a result does he think the Minister will get? What about an employer who says: "I will not tell you the progress I am making on employment equity because it is none of your business; the law does not force me to do that"? How does he foresee the reaction of a medium sized employer with 100 or more employees? Of course employers will be required to fulfil a couple of obligations. They will have to plan for eliminating systemic discrimination and presenting a plan of action. However, I do not see anything in the Bill that forces them to report on progress made. Can the Hon. Member find anything in the Bill requiring progress made being reported to the Canadian Human Rights Commission?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) quite correctly pointed out one of the very serious weaknesses in the legislation. There is no real clout in the hands of the Minister to enforce the legislation. All she can do is get down on bended knee and beg, plead, cajole, request, and urge. All she can do is knock on the door and say: "Please, Mr. Employer, hire more disabled persons and more women". That approach has been tried in the past for decades, and it has not worked.

When we in the New Democratic Party looked at the legislation, we worked hard to strengthen the Bill. Hon. Members of the Official Opposition also proposed amendments which would put some teeth into it. When the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier talks about the Minister knocking on the doors of employers and insisting upon action, what we will find instead is the Minister standing outside corporate boardrooms and whimpering: "Please, please, please, we want you to obey this law, and if you do not obey it, we might amend it". In the law itself there are no sanctions or teeth whatsoever.

• (1530)

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I will quote further from the Minister's speech of yesterday. It is quite interesting how a Minister of the Crown could make such statements. I will come back to this later on in my speech about this because I noticed some interesting comments of hers yesterday. At page 12453 of *Hansard*, the Minister said:

At the end of that year they will be required to report on the progress that they have made toward achieving these goals. These reports will be made public, open

to media and public scrutiny—and this is the second half of the two-tiered system—

This is exactly what Judge Abella rejected, voluntary reporting on progress. She said that you cannot believe that public opinion will change an employer who has in his practices or has in his systemic employment practices actions discriminatory to the four groups we are talking about, namely, women, the handicapped, native peoples and visible minorities. If an employer has in his books or in his practices things that discriminate against these groups, how does the Member square what the Minister told us yesterday with the Abella Report which says: "Don't rely on voluntary reporting because it won't happen"? It has not happened yet and it will not start happening after Bill C-62 is passed.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) has joined me today in this important debate. I would be quite prepared to seek unanimous consent to ask the Minister to answer that very important question.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robinson: In the short time available, I would note that the Hon. Member is raising a very important question. Under this legislation and, in particular, Clause 5 of the legislation it states that while an employer has to prepare a plan which sets out various goals and timetables, this plan remains a secret document. The employer has to keep it locked in his or her principal place of business for a period of at least three years, but the employer does not even have to give it to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. In committee, the opposition Party suggested that if we are going to be able to monitor effectively the progress of employers in achieving employment equity, we should at least make sure that we have access to the statement of the achievement of goals and timetables as recommended by Judge Abella. That amendment was rejected. For that, as well as the many other reasons that we have been enunciating during the course of this debate, we are opposed to the third reading of this Bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. The Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille).

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton-Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-62, an Act respecting, as it says, employment equity, is a Bill which has been the subject of debate in the House now for some period of time. We have to ask ourselves, does this Bill in third reading, after we have tried to work on amendments and ways to improve it, fulfil its declared purposes? The purpose as outlined in the Bill in the second clause, in about the third sentence, sets forth what the alleged purpose of this Bill is. It is to achieve equality in the workplace. It says: "In the workplace".

First, Mr. Speaker, it is only in some workplaces, it is not in "the workplace". In fact, we have to say that "the workplace" only applies to those workplaces where there are more than