

Government Orders

The knock on the door will be from the compliance officer who is representing the federal government. The compliance officer will have significant powers to be able to delve into the affairs of the company to see if the employer is in compliance with the legislation, and the employer must prove it.

This is where race questions come in on the forthcoming census. This is why the questions about race have to be asked. The compliance officer will say that according to the last census, in a certain geographic area there are a certain number of green people, a certain number of yellow people, a certain number of people who speak this language and that language, and therefore the employer must employ people in the same proportion as the people in that community and they will be given quotas.

The employer will say that normally they hire the best people; it does not matter who they are or what their education is, what their sex is, they are hired on merit. The compliance officer will say they will have to take affirmative action into the mix, that they cannot just hire on merit any more, they have to look at both of the equations. Then the employer says come in and have a look around and see what we have.

Let us say that in a room there are 20 people working, and every one of them is from a visible minority or from some other designated group. The compliance officer looks at his list and says it says on the sheet that they do not have anybody who self-identifies as one of the disadvantaged groups. If you look around, my God, everybody in the place is in the designated group.

• (1605)

The problem is that we Canadians do not get up in the morning and ask what part of what victim group we are in and look for the support of the state to get anywhere in my life, seeking advantages that are not common to everybody.

In the purview of the House of Commons there are 1,700 employees. Recently, people were asked to voluntarily identify themselves as to what designated group they fall into. Only 50 people said they fell into one of these designated groups. Only 30 per cent of the people responded. That is not the kind of people Canadians are. We do not respond to that. We do not want a constitution or laws based on race. We want laws based on the equality of all individuals.

In any event, we have this legislation and we have pointed out the error, the problem, or the hole in it. The government looked at it and very wisely assumed our counsel and said we had a good point.

We do not like the legislation and we will vote against it. If we can improve it we will try because when we wake up in the morning it will be in the driveway.

I visited my brother-in-law a few years ago. He was looking at a new motorcycle and he had the brochure on the kitchen table. His wife came home, saw the brochure, and went ballistic. He asked her why she got so mad and she said "Because the brochure is on the kitchen table today and tomorrow the motorcycle will be in the driveway". That is the same story on this legislation. Today the brochure is on the table and tomorrow the legislation will be in the driveway, and there is nothing we can do about it. The government has its massive majority and it is going to push the legislation through come hell or high water. We must try to make it better in any little way we can.

Giving credit where credit is due, the government saw that the amendment improved the legislation and it made an amendment that improved the amendment we submitted. We end up with better legislation, which is how the House works from time to time.

I am speaking in support of the amendment, which will make this draconian legislation a little less draconian, perhaps a bit better. There is a ray of sunshine and light that comes into the House from time to time.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I would yield to my hon. colleague from Toronto. However, I thank her for the privilege.

Speaking very briefly to this amendment, I would like to refute some of the misinterpretations, though not done with malice, by the hon. member.

He indicated in his opening remarks that while subsection 15(1) talks about the equality of all Canadians, in essence he argued that subsection 15(2) negates this by saying that we are not equal because of race. That to me is a misinterpretation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I have more faith in the framers, fathers, and parents of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I think what section 15 tells us is that we should have equal benefit and protection of the law, all Canadians on an equal basis, irrespective of race, disability, origin, or gender. At the same time, subsection 15(2) deals with disadvantaged people, as visible minorities may be, people of First Nations origin, women, and persons with disabilities.

In subsection 15(2) the framers of our charter of rights and freedoms were trying to prevent possible dilatory tactics on the part of people who would complain that government can introduce legislation that will address those very disadvantages. They are not being given advantages; they are only being restored to equality. They are disadvantaged, so we must restore them to equality. They are not being restored to superiority. I think that has to be made very clear to all Canadians.