

Oral Questions

SUGGESTIONS MADE BY BISHOP TUTU

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to recall to the Minister the strong rhetoric of the Prime Minister before the United Nations six months ago. He said the Government was ready to impose total economic sanctions and, if necessary, break off diplomatic relations with the Union of South Africa. Would the Minister not agree that, because of the worsening situation in South Africa, the Bishop had a good suggestion, that either Canada ask for the acceleration of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in August, moving it up to June, or set a moral tone and some leadership before that meeting is held?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been setting precisely that moral tone and that leadership by way of the actions and statements by the Prime Minister and our Ambassador, Stephen Lewis, at the United Nations, by way of the role we have played in the Commonwealth, and the work of Archbishop Ted Scott, the Canadian member of the Eminent Persons Group. That group is in place. It faces a prospect that is much less optimistic than all of us had hoped. Nonetheless, the group is preparing a report as quickly as it can. This morning I was informed that it expects to have the report ready by the end of June.

• (1420)

I think that would then be an appropriate time for us to consider what other timetables would be followed and if it makes sense to move ahead the meeting now set for August 3 to 5. In my judgment it would most unfortunate for us to take the Eminent Persons Group, which has worked so hard and effectively to this point—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):—and cut off its work before it has been concluded.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

PROVISIONS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and it is about the Prime Minister's firm commitment made during the women's debate of August, 1984, to protect the equality rights of women by including provisions of equal pay for work of equal value in contracts

granted by Government to the private sector, and his further undertaking of affirmative action as the highest of priorities. These promises are not being met by Bill C-62 as it has no mandatory application.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a long preamble. Question, please.

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, why will the Minister not listen to the women of Canada who say that the Bill has no teeth, and bring the Bill back to the House amending it through the Senate before it passes into law, thereby fulfilling the Prime Minister's promises to the women of Canada?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Bill on employment equity, the first such piece of legislation ever introduced in Canada, provides for a mechanism to enforce the rules of the Bill. That mechanism, as suggested by Judge Rosalie Abella in her report, is the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It will be provided with information as a result of this legislation which will enable it to initiate action to eliminate systemic discrimination in a way that has not happened before. The other night before the committee, the Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission asked that this Bill proceed with all speed.

[*Translation*]

INQUIRY WHY GOVERNMENT WILL NOT AMEND PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, why, during the famous debate on women and women's issues, did the Prime Minister claim the political will to improve the status of women? This is not reflected in the Bill. There is no mandatory application. There is simply window dressing instead of legislation with teeth which could really improve the situation of women, minorities and the handicapped.

Can you tell me why you do not want to amend the Bill in the Senate and refer it back to the House?

[*English*]

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, obviously we have a disagreement. Of course we had a disagreement when the Liberal Party voted against employment equity. That does not surprise me.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: For 14 years, Liberal Members did nothing about employment equity. I am not surprised that they are still arguing against it. I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we are implementing employment equity under the Canadian Jobs Strategy, and already we have seen that 46 per cent of the positions under the Job Development Program have gone to women.