

Employment Equity

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The question is on Motion No. 16A:

That Bill C-62, be amended in Clause 4 by striking out line 46 at page 2 and substituting the following therefor:

"eligibility or geography according to whichever of these reference criteria provides the most opportunity to qualified members of the designated groups and from which".

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five Members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Pursuant to Standing Order 114(11), the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 19B.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East) moved:

That Bill C-62, be amended in Clause 4 by adding immediately after line 2 at page 3 the following:

"(c) having full access to, for the purposes of subsections (a) and (b), consultative services concerning employment equity as provided by the Department of Employment and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this amendment would add a further subclause to Clause 4. As I pointed out, Clause 4 is the key clause of this Bill. It says that employers shall implement employment equity by doing certain things. Unfortunately, if the employers do not do these certain things, there is no penalty. I will deal with that in a later amendment.

Clause 4 says that an employer shall implement employment equity by doing certain things which are listed in subclauses (a) and (b) and paragraphs (i) and (ii) of subclause (b). This would add subclause (c) to Clause 4 after line 2 on page 3. It says that the employer should implement employment equity by:

having full access to, for the purposes of subsections (a) and (b), consultative services concerning employment equity as provided by the Department of Employment and Immigration.

The Government and Parliament of Canada want private firms to introduce employment equity. Let us assume that the private firms, in good faith, want to do that. The Bill lays out certain obligations in subclauses (a) and (b). It says that they must eliminate obstacles to employment for the target groups and must institute positive policies and practices to achieve employment equity. Very often private firms do not know how to go about this. They should have access to the consultative services on employment equity within the Department of Employment and Immigration. The Government of Canada should go a long way toward assisting the private sector to achieve employment equity.

I am 100 per cent in favour of a strong Bill obliging affirmative action by the private sector, but I do not think we should leave the private sector all alone to do it. We must help it to do this. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that the private sector has access to the services of the Government in setting up systems for affirmative action and employment equity. We must ensure that the Government has the personnel available to assist these firms in doing that. That is the purpose of this amendment.

We tried to amend the Bill in committee by having this policy accepted. It was rejected in committee. We are now trying again. In committee a representative of the Government said he agreed with the amendment in principle, but did not believe it should be in the Bill. I am afraid that if it is not in the Bill, when this law is passed private firms will say that they want help from the Government with the burden which has been laid upon them and the Government may say that it has other priorities. Therefore, employment equity will not take place because firms will not have the support of the Government which they require. I do not think it hurts one bit to put this in the Bill. It shows a greater commitment to employment equity by the Government. I urge the Government to accept this amendment.

Mr. Gerry Weiner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it was I who made the commitment when this amendment was moved before the legislative committee. I said that the Government is committed to providing those services and, therefore, we do not need an amendment. It is our intention to market the program. We have made it eminently clear how beneficial we feel employment equity is going to be for all Canadians, how productive it will make us as a nation, and how we require it to prosper and make full use of the entire potential of the community. We cannot continue to operate in the absence of the rich resource of 60 per cent of the population. It will certainly be in our interest to ensure that this program succeeds.

We have already stated, on numerous occasions, that we are ready to stake our futures on the social justice and social conscience of the Government. I assure my hon. friend that the Canada Employment Insurance Commission will provide those consultative services concerning employment equity to all employers who want to establish employment equity programs,