

Employment Equity

Again, we learned the discrimination and difficulty with which these particular target groups in our society must live.

● (1610)

I will remember today as Black Monday for a long time. Members on this side of the House posed questions with respect to the demonstration by the disabled community that was taking place outside of the House. They had come into the gallery to hear the proceedings. I was saddened, disheartened and turned off by what was, without a doubt, the most inappropriate interjections on the part of the Conservative Party both during the questions from this side of the House and particularly following the interjection from the gallery by Beryl Potter, who had made a most eloquent speech on the Hill. I can accept and understand differences in the philosophical approach, particularly with respect to the economic vision of how a society should be organized, but I never would have thought it possible to witness such lack of respect and unnecessary reaction on the part of members of the Conservative Party when it comes to misery and unhappiness. I find that most regrettable.

I have already given a short history lesson about what has been done for women, visible minorities and the handicapped and the fact that many of the recommendations in a series of six reports were put into action. Subsequently, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) issued a Blue Paper entitled *Declaration on the Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992*. The issue of integrating disabled persons into our society as full partners is a fairly new phenomenon. The Prime Minister decided to issue his Blue Paper which would bring to the attention of society—particularly during the electoral period when there is a constituency which he felt could be captive—a series of wonderful pronouncements and rhetoric which essentially mean very little.

In this declaration, the Government of Canada recalled the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, the declaration of the United Nations on the rights of mentally retarded persons and the rights of disabled persons, and also recalled Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which prohibits discrimination on the basis of any mental or physical disability.

The Prime Minister emphasized in this declaration the objectives of the World Programme of Action and bore in mind the distinction made between impairment, disability and handicap and the resulting conclusion that a handicap is a function of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. He bore in mind a number of other aspects of the World Programme and recognized the significant loss to the Canadian economy when the full potential and abilities of persons with disabilities are not utilized, and recognized the real cost upon the economy due to segregation. I raised that point recently when I attempted to point out that it was in the best interest of the corporate sector to include people based on their ability rather than exclude them based on their disability.

The Prime Minister went on to enunciate 11 principles, all of which are laudable in words. However, nothing has happened. Let me cite Principles Nos. 4 and 7 for the record.

Principle No. 4 states:

Persons with disabilities shall be ensured involvement in decision making which pertains to the design and organization of programs and services considered necessary for the integration of disabled persons into all facets of society. In this respect there shall be a particular emphasis on rehabilitation.

Principle No. 7 states:

The development of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities shall be encouraged so as to provide those citizens with a means of self-development and a voice of their own to articulate their needs, views and priorities.

One would presume that action would follow the articulation of these *bons mots* and *bons vœux*. Unfortunately, that is not the reality.

Today there was a most eloquent demonstration on the Hill, at a time when we are debating an amendment to Clause 3 of the Bill which in effect exempts Government Departments, the House of Commons, the Senate and the Library of Parliament from the provisions of this Bill. Since these are places where disabled people could best find jobs, the Government should take the lead in this area rather than follow.

I want to read into the record what Beryl Potter said during her eloquent speech calling for understanding. She said:

When Flora MacDonald was appointed Minister of Employment, we thought things might get better. When discussions were started to legislate an Employment Equity program we were very encouraged. But that's as high as our hopes went. What came out of those talks and meetings was Bill C-62, a condescending piece of paper that has no strength—no teeth—no proper enforcement mechanism for non-compliance—no penalties. It is simply not worth the paper it is written on.

Two weeks ago, we came to Ottawa to confront Brian Mulroney. We took him by surprise and held on to his hand till we told him what we were driving 600 miles to tell him—that Bill C-62 was far too weak and could even be detrimental to disabled persons.

We asked him to take a close look at the Bill before it went through for its third reading in the House. He told us he was very open to our comments and to prove it he introduced us to his Chief Policy Advisor, Geof Norquay. He directed Mr. Norquay to have an immediate meeting with us and to report back to him. This was even brought up in the House that afternoon. He even waved to us and gave us that big smile of his as he went into the House for Question Period. The meeting lasted for half an hour. All of our concerns were recorded by Mr. Norquay, and he promised to get back to us within two weeks before Bill C-62 went in for the third reading.

We have heard nothing, they even refused to return our phone calls this week, but the Bill had its third reading last Thursday. Are we going to stand for this?

He promised to keep an open mind. He promised to take a serious look at the Bill. They promised to get back before third reading.

These promises have been broken. The Bill is nothing more than an information bill for employers. Are we going to leave it at that or are we going to keep fighting for what we know are our rights? We must stand together and fight for a repeal of the Bill so that the necessary amendments can be made.

The disabled must stand and be counted in this country.

I finish with her last words:

So let us fight, fight, fight for our rights.

I hope that the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary and those who have a possible role in the decision making will listen to that group of people in our society who need the