

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

These changes are not, however, enough to guarantee equity in the workplace. Representation of the four groups designated under the act is still lower than their representation in the population as a whole. There also tend to be fewer members of these groups in key professional categories such as management, and their average salary is always lower than that of other employees. This fact, the reason why the Employment Equity Act was passed in the first place, is ample justification for the continued existence of this legislation and for increased efforts by all parties to improve the situation.

I think a lot remains to be done in the years to come. I will continue to examine what is done by employers to enhance employment of members in the four designated groups, and I will submit further progress reports and indicate where further improvements are necessary.

I may add that if the situation has not improved sufficiently by the time the legislation is reviewed in 1991, this government will consider introducing some amendments.

I know the situation is improving. Employees at Employment and Immigration Canada are working harder than ever before to help employers implement their employment equity programs.

Throughout Canada, regional consultants are monitoring the situation, and their services are available to all federally regulated employers. Communities and professional associations are urged to provide information and express their views.

Finally, to enhance the effectiveness of employer equity programs, instruments such as employment practice tests have been developed.

[English]

It is my sense that there is a realization among employers that employment equity is good business, yielding both economic and social benefits. Workplace shortages are a reality of the future. Members of designated groups will without a doubt be needed to fill those gaps and our competitive situation will be improved since we will be using all of our talents and skills. From a social standpoint, offering group members equality in employment leads to improved financial security

and, in the end, a fairer and more compassionate society in which to live.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, as employers become more experienced at implementing their equity programs, we will put greater emphasis on results. As was pointed out in the Abella report, employment equity will happen only if we work hard to make it happen. And that is what this government has done and will continue to do in the future.

[English]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the report on employment equity tabled by the minister in the House today confirms the criticism that we made of this legislation when it was presented to Parliament in 1985. According to the report tabled today there has been very little progress with respect to employment equity, and in some industries there has been no progress whatsoever.

This is a law which deals with affirmative action. It applies to four target groups: women, aboriginal people, disabled people and visible minorities. It follows on the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1976 passed by a Liberal Government and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms introduced and passed by the Liberals in 1982.

In 1983 the government of the day set up the Abella Commission to advise the government on how to proceed with employment equity. Abella's report, which was presented in 1984 to the new Conservative government, suggested a law that would have teeth in it. When this law was presented to the House in 1985 it said that firms under federal jurisdiction must proceed with employment equity. But it did not provide for a sanction and it did not provide for a penalty if those firms did not proceed with employment equity.

We said at the time that unless there was a sanction in the law that these companies would drag their feet and they would not implement employment equity. That is exactly what has been done.

Let me refer to the report the minister just tabled. Let us look at some of the firms that reported. The report ranks these employers in terms of three categories. Category A is if they are close to what is supposed to be done; category B are those that do not meet the target