

Government Orders

Ms. Blondin—Andrew: I appreciate the hon. member's question. On a professional and personal level I felt the case had to be highlighted and maybe this was the only opportunity I would get as a member of Parliament. It also demonstrates that this person, who is aboriginal and disabled as I emphasized in my speech and members can check *Hansard* if they want, has struggles which are many. Many programs and services are available but not all of them can overcome the struggles.

• (1245)

Bill C-64 may not address this issue. However, I felt it was a very important issue to be raised on behalf of a person who belonged to one of the four under-represented groups or targeted areas. That person has an opportunity to have a voice through me. That happens with many of us in the House of Commons.

I do not have the opportunity to get up to make statements which is something I would have done as a member of Parliament in the previous session. I felt that because this person was a disabled aboriginal person and his case was so specific that it needed a bit of profile. I have provided the opportunity at this time.

In terms of employment equity, if we look at all of the information I have provided, the hon. member will know that perhaps this was stretching it a bit. However, I felt that because of this individual case, which has had very little success, perhaps it would be an opportunity for it to have a bit of attention.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make the observation that members opposite, in particular the last member who spoke, are confusing discriminatory hiring practices with the term employment equity.

We have laws in Canada that prohibit discriminatory hiring practices. We have laws that prohibit employers from not hiring qualified people because they happen to be a member of a certain visible minority group or because they may be physically or mentally disabled. There are laws which prohibit businesses from discriminating against people based on who or what they are.

This bill ensures that if two people of equal merit, of equal training, of equal ability, apply for a job and one happens to be a member of a designated group and the other one is not, that favour be bestowed on the person who is in the designated group and disfavour be bestowed on the person who is not. I fail to see the logic of the bill.

The government is trying to tell free enterprise how to hire people. The fact is that the government is already in the face of business too much and it is hurting the economy.

The hon. member related a very tragic case. She brought it down to a personal level. I would like to bring it down to a personal level as well.

My oldest son has a learning disability. He probably would fit into one of the designated groups. I expect that my son will become employable because my wife and I are doing everything we can to ensure that he receives training and obtains the ability to become employable, not because he is handicapped in his learning, but because he has the skills to do a job.

I do not want the government to look after my son's future. I want him to be independent. That is why I want him to be trained and to have the ability to hold a job.

• (1250)

The state should not be determining the future of my son. When it does that, it takes away his independence, his ability to function as an independent Canadian, to acquire the skills and to merit getting a job, not because of his disability but because of his strengths.

That is why I am fundamentally opposed to this bill. It will diminish the qualities, the abilities, the training of individuals and will place them in a category that will get them a job because of who they are and not what they are or what they can do.

Ms. Blondin—Andrew: Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of the constitutional talks I learned a very important lesson from Canadians. Treating all people the same does not necessarily express equality. Needs are different based on the individual needs of a person.

I salute my colleague for the efforts he has made on behalf of his son. However, we are not talking about one individual. We are talking about four designated groups. Those groups have a disadvantage in the system. It is not that blatant.

I know there is an appeal process. If a person feels discriminated against he or she can go to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. However, if a person is systematically ignored, not promoted or marginalized year after year and if the statistics bear out no movement for certain designated groups, systematically there is a problem. It is very subtle because employers can ignore employees they do not favour. They can engage in a very subtle approach and make it difficult for employees by ignoring them, by not promoting them or hiring them for other jobs. It is very hard to prove.

As I indicated before, because these four designated groups get paid less and are under-represented on promotion lists, they need our help. That is something the hon. member should think about. It is not to discriminate, not to make more dependent and not to hire people who do not have the talent or merit. It is to