

*Government Orders*

bution is of value to the country but there are other interests that have to be recognized.

Let me deal very quickly with the amendment that we now have before us. That is the amendment which changes the word "chairman" to the word "chair". We have recognized in the House of Commons for years now that this sexist language must be removed from the statutes of Canada. That is an ongoing process. The word at present used in the Public Service Staff Relations Act, which has been on the books of Canada for some years, is "chairman". Bill C-49 merely picks up the wording of the Public Service Staff Relations Act and uses that terminology.

• (1620 )

If the hon. member wants to effectively change this sexist designation, she could introduce in the House of Commons a private member's bill changing the terminology of the Public Service Staff Relations Act. I am sure if she did that, it would meet with the approval of all members of the House. At the moment, we are simply using the terminology that is already there.

While the change would readily meet the support of members in terms of the principle involved, in terms of the merits of the particular application it is not a useful exercise. Bill C-49 before us is a transitory bill. It will be expended, hopefully, in a matter of days and, certainly, in a matter of 90 days. So it will produce nothing for the future. The change in the Public Service Staff Relations Act will go on for decades to come. So my suggestion to the member is that she withdraw her amendment and seek a change in the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

Let me address very briefly, because I know we are limited to 10 minutes on these speeches, the two issues that have been brought to the floor by members opposite. One is pay equity for the hospital workers. As I said, the President of the Treasury Board is even now prepared to meet with representatives of the hospital workers.

I want the House and all Canadians to know, because it has now become public, that an offer was made to conciliate, under a binding conciliation board, the matter of pay equity in relation to the hospital workers. Everyone knows that there is litigation outstanding under the Canadian Human Rights Act and that there is a decision of a human rights tribunal relating to pay equity. That is an ongoing process. That is a process outside the form of

this bill. Even with that process being external to this bill, there is the resolve on the part of the Treasury Board to have that matter settled as well as all other matters, because it is obviously in the interests of the government, the Treasury Board, the Department of Veterans Affairs and, most especially, the workers to have all matters resolved.

The problem is how do you resolve these matters. How do you bring the parties together? It is very difficult for all of us who realize that we have reached the point that it has to be by legislation passed by this House. That legislation is pursuant to our public duty in the House of Commons and in the Parliament of Canada to protect the public. We do not want to do that at the expense of workers and that is why there is provision for a conciliation board on which the workers will be represented. The union will be there to ensure that their interests are protected. That is quite a normal process in labour-management relations.

Let me speak for one moment about the ships crews because that is very personal to me. I live on the east coast of Canada and I am well aware of the work of the Coast Guard, fisheries patrol vessels and the auxiliary vessels of the Department of National Defence and the Department of Public Works. I know the difficulties of engagement in that kind of occupation, but the ships crews know this very day that part of this process would have yielded to them what we have sought for decades. That is pay equality between east coast workers and west coast workers. It is a personal loss to me that the opportunity to bring about that pay equality, which could have been achieved Monday night by negotiation, was lost.

I can only hope that it will still come to those valued workers that they will receive pay equality through the process as established by this bill. It was in the hands of members of Parliament to deliver that goal which we have been trying to achieve for decades. It is unfortunate that that goal was lost. It was also the failure of the bargaining parties, but we had our opportunity. We had our chance and we did not take it.

Let me end by saying that we have a bill before the House of Commons, Bill C-49. It is not the kind of legislation in which members take any special heart. We recognize that it results from the failure of the system and the persons involved, the parties administering the