

Government Orders

crucible of human rights. This is the government which has spoken out so often against the human rights abuses in other nations and which condemned the Government of China for its actions last June. This is the government which less than a year ago applauded its leader when he said our Constitution is not worth the paper it is written on because the notwithstanding clause does not fully protect individual rights.

This government, so clearly committed to human rights, was found to have discriminated against hospital service staff. The Human Rights Tribunal ruled that this human rights conscious government had to re-evaluate all hospital service worker positions and revise their classification. Isn't it surprising that this government would profess to be committed to one thing and then act in a completely different manner? But this is the sad truth. Even after the Human Rights Commission told the government that it was wrong, that it was violating fundamental individual rights, the government went on to frustrate and impede other efforts of ships crews and hospital service workers to attain pay equity.

• (1650)

In 1988, the Treasury Board missed the deadline for submitting to the Public Service Staff Relations Board lists of personnel to be designated essential during the round of bargaining after contracts ended on December 31, 1987. Nine departments failed to meet the deadline for submitting lists of their own essential personnel.

Mr. Crosbie: How many?

Ms. Clancy: Nine. Nine, John. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine.

Twice since, however, the Federal Court has held that this mistake could not be overlooked, that the government had acted erroneously. Your government. The Minister from St. John's government.

What does this say about Canada's government? I guess it doesn't say a whole lot. In fact, I often wonder how much difficulty the hon. members on the other side of the House have looking at themselves in the mirror every morning, some more than others probably.

The issue before us is the striking ships crews and the striking hospital service workers. Let us wipe the slate

clean. Let's forget the broken promises, the ineptitude, the lack of commitment and the eternal word twisting. What we have before us is an opportunity for the government to put its money where its mouth is.

Here we have a government which claims so sanctimoniously to be committed to human rights. Let us see if it is prepared to back up its words with action. The hon. Minister of Transport who scuttled out of here a few minutes ago said that he does not want to hold up the ships.

Some Hon. Members: Order!

Ms. Clancy: Is there anything wrong with "scuttle"? It is a word in Nova Scotia that means move quickly. You probably don't know that in your part of the country.

Anyway, the hon. minister who left here a few minutes ago talked about the fact that we should not hold up the ships. We already mentioned to the hon. minister about the Russian ships that cleared the Seaway today and the fact that Canadian ships have the ability to clear the Seaway for the rest of this week and next week as well.

We are with the minister. We want the ships to move. What is the answer? The answer is to settle the strike, give the workers what they deserve. I guess that is too simplistic for the government. In fact, I am issuing a challenge to this government. As difficult as it will be and as much as it will place pressure on this government, I am challenging this government to be consistent. I am challenging this government to honour its word and to respect democratic individual rights.

I am very aware that I am asking this government to do something that it finds very difficult. Five years of habit is intensely hard to break but let's see if we can inject some integrity back into political words. It would be of benefit to all of us.

The government claims to be committed to democratic principle and individual rights. Then let it withdraw its motion for back to work legislation. The right to strike is a fundamental, democratic right. It is a form of peaceful dissent which must not be tampered with through government force or government coercion. In fact, the right to strike is such a fundamental right that many other rights are directly hinged to it.