

*Government Orders*

up, because their mothers and fathers are not getting paid what they deserve". The Human Rights Tribunal has said that. I am not making this up. I am not pulling it out of the air. I am not on some rant and rave about equal pay for work of equal value. We have got the Human Rights Tribunal saying this.

What I was questioning was this idea of equalization payments. I thought when the Human Rights Tribunal said people should get paid the same amount as certain other people, that it meant they should get paid the same amount. But that is not the way they do it in government. They do not give them the wage to which they are entitled. They give them their same old wage and then they add what we call an equalization payment on top. The problem with the equalization payment, of course, is that it does not roll into the contributions to their pension. It does not roll into the amount of pension they are entitled to and it does not, in fact, have the same status as wages.

Therefore, you have these workers, even though they are getting more money through equalization payments, which by the way, they are not getting yet, even two and a half years later. But even if they were getting them, they would still end up poorer when they are old, as compared to other workers doing exactly the same work.

The President of the Treasury Board wrote to me and said: "We cannot deal with wages under the Canadian Human Rights Act, only under the Public Service Staff Relations Act, because that is where wages are negotiated". Well, I kind of knew that. I wondered why these negotiations that have been going on for two years had not managed to come to grips with this issue. That is where these things should be dealt with, at the bargaining table. Yet the employer, knowing full well that this was a crucial issue for which these hospital services workers had been fighting for nearly nine years, that is a fair wage, as the Human Rights Tribunal had said they should be receiving, refused to address that issue in its bargaining. It has known for two years that if that issue was not addressed, there would be a strike.

So do not accuse me of being insensitive to the needs of the veterans in our hospitals. Where have the government members who have veterans homes in their ridings been? Where has the Minister of National Defence been

while the needs of these workers have been ignored? Where has the Minister of Veterans Affairs been while this issue has been sitting on a shelf, going through layers and layers of bureaucracy?

In 1987, \$28 million was paid to these people. That was not the gracious gift of a generous government. It is the amount by which they had been underpaid. The President of the Treasury Board stood in the House and said: "We have got another \$10 million". Well, that is what he told me in a letter back in August, that there was \$10 million, and that the departments had been instructed to get this out to these people as another interim payment, not a final settlement by any means of the problem or the decision of the tribunal, but as an interim payment. It still has not been done. I ask, why not? Is that \$10 million being held over their heads? Has it been withheld from them deliberately for over four months, in fact for over two years, as a bludgeon, a pry, as some way of forcing them to accept less than a fair settlement? That is the only conclusion I can come to. It is their money and it should be in their hands. It should be putting shoes and clothes on the feet and the backs of their children and food on the table, not sitting in government coffers gaining interest.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On a point of order, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

**Mr. Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I do not mean to interrupt the hon. member but I notice that the clock is working now and according to the order that was passed earlier would suggest that we have to put the question at a quarter to the hour. I am wondering whether the hon. member would indicate whether she is prepared to conclude her remarks so that a member of the New Democratic Party can participate at third reading stage, because the vote has to be put at a quarter to five.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I hear some members saying that this is not a point of order. Technically speaking, it is not a point of order. It is more in the form of a question to the member who has the floor. I will hear the member for Halifax West. I gather that it is on the same point.

**Mr. Crosby:** In a sense. On the same point of order, if it relates to speaking time, because it may well be that the member from Ottawa West does intend to wind up her remarks. Before she does I thought it might be