

Government Orders

The government also could be listening to people when it talks to them about the clawback of seniors' pensions. It could be listening to people who are saying: "We have saved all our lives. We have paid through our taxes for our old age security. We have made plans for our retirement. We have invested in certain ways so that we can enjoy retirement in comfort and not be dependent on the state to support us in our retirement".

It could be listening to pensioners who say: "Yes, I get a little more than I need right now but I know that the likelihood that I am going to die before my wife is very high and I know that my pension dies with me. I know that that leaves her dependent on nothing but old age security and the guaranteed income supplement and, if that is all she has, that still leaves her at a poverty level income".

The government should listen to the pensioner who says: "I have provided for my old age. When my children were little they did without things. When they were in high school they did without things. We lived in a smaller house. We did not have a car. We sacrificed so that now in retirement years we would not have to face poverty". He says: "I do not want my wife to face poverty after I am gone".

What the pensioner says, and what he wants this government to listen to is: "I want to be able to take what I have now that is over and above my immediate needs and to be able to ensure that my wife does not become one of the two-thirds of elderly women who are alone who are living in poverty". This government is robbing those pensioners of that opportunity to provide for their spouses after their death. That is another example of where this government does not listen.

• (1530)

On Monday morning the Minister of Justice challenged my ability to understand the situation. I suggest that it is the Minister of Justice who does not understand the situation. If he and the government understood the situation they would have taken far more seriously the need to negotiate and reach a settlement with their workers, they would have known that the daily cost of this strike is far more than the yearly cost of settling this strike, having these people back to work and happy to be there because they know their government has recog-

nized their right to a basic and decent wage for the work they do.

The member for Ottawa West knows what this strike is about because she listens. She also understands basic democratic rights. These rights are enshrined in the International Declaration of Human Rights. They are rights that are enshrined in other conventions to which this country is signatory. We see those rights being shattered here. They are rights that apply right across this country, whether it is in Bull Harbour on the north tip of Vancouver Island, or in Cambridge Bay where that imaginary line comes down and if you dock on one side of the dock you get \$1,600 less for doing the same work than if you dock on the other side, or if it is Hamilton Harbour, the right of workers to organize, to negotiate and, if necessary, to withdraw their services so that they can negotiate for a proper recompense for the work they do is not something that applies to, or depends on, or should depend on, the whims of this House or the whims of the government of the day. These are basic human rights.

They are a basic human right because there are times in every labour situation when the right to withdraw your services becomes the only means of equalizing the balance of power between the employer and the employee. The employer has much power over the employee, the right to hire, the right to fire, the right to promote, the right to lock out and the right to pay less than is required to provide for one's family or for one's own survival. That economic power is a tremendous power. The government has that power over these workers. The only thing they have to counterbalance that power is the right to say "this isn't fair, this isn't just, and I choose not to work for those kinds of wages in those kinds of conditions for this employer".

The member for Ottawa West understands this situation because she recognizes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. She recognizes the right of people to be paid the same for the work they do if the work they do has the same value. She recognizes the right of women to be paid the same as men for doing the same work. That is one of the fundamental issues at stake in this strike. Without that issue there would be no strike.

Finally, the member for Ottawa West knows enough to listen to her colleagues who have spoken eloquently in this House. If there is any misapprehension on the part of the government, any member of the government, the parliamentary secretary or the President of the Treasury