

*Oral Questions*

As the minister knows, only two days ago the striking ships crews workers provided emergency service and rescued a U.S. Coast Guard vessel. I think these workers have shown their good faith.

The hospital workers have also shown their good faith by offering to provide emergency services. That offer has been turned down by the Treasury Board. I include those hospital workers in my own riding in the Yukon. Obviously, the solution to these disputes is good faith bargaining. Why doesn't the government do this?

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows I have mentioned time and time again in the House that at the time negotiations broke off, one group was asking for a wage increase of 17.4 per cent and the other group was asking for an increase of 14.3 per cent.

**An Hon. Member:** Over three years.

**Mr. de Cotret:** Given that 95 per cent of all public servants have settled for rates of increase in the range of 4.1 to 4.2 per cent, we felt this was a rather exorbitant demand to be placed on government at this time.

I would just like to underline for my hon. colleague what the bill does. The bill does two things. It attempts to ensure that the safety, security and health of Canadians is assured by back to work legislation. It also tends to assure that we deal with this situation with fairness and equity by going to a binding conciliation process, which is essentially a third-party process, which will bind both parties to the eventual conclusion of the current dispute. So, we are being fair and equitable, and we are preserving the safety, security and health of Canadians.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, what I understand from what the minister is saying is that fairness is just too darned expensive for this government and it does not have much of a commitment to it.

The Prime Minister has often bragged about his commitment to pay equity for Canadians. Yet in 1987, a Human Rights Tribunal told the federal government that it had to resolve the major pay equity problem which exists in its hospitals and in the hospital services. These problems still have not been resolved. The government refuses to negotiate with the union and now says that the Human Rights Tribunal had no jurisdiction.

If the Prime Minister truly supports the concept of pay equity, will he immediately direct the President of the Treasury Board to return to the bargaining table and renegotiate a true pay equity agreement?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. de Cotret:** Mr. Speaker, following the decisions that were brought down over the years, we have already paid the hospital services group \$28 million in retroactive pay to meet the pay equity standards to which this government is firmly committed. We are in the process of paying an extra \$10 million to meet the second stage of the process. The third stage of the process is before the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and we believe all the provisions that have been handed down will fully be met. The Prime Minister's commitment to pay equity will be honoured in full with the measures that Treasury Board has already taken.

When we look at pay equity from the other point of view, pay parity if you like, in the ships crews dispute, I have mentioned to this House time and time again that I have put on the table a firm offer to have pay parity between the east coast and the west coast workers on date of signing of the collective agreement. That is already on the record.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, in the New Democratic Party we only look at pay equity one way, and that is justice. It is justice based on the role of people, on regional justice from the east to the west for women and men.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, the International Labour Organization has already condemned this government's unjustified use of back-to-work legislation.

Does the government really want another black mark from the international community? How can the government justify statements to the effect that the public interest demands we put an end to this strike, when Treasury Board has turned down the union's offer to provide essential services?

**Mr. de Cotret:** Mr. Speaker, the government has conducted lengthy negotiations in order to reach a settlement with both groups. Again, I may point out that we are talking about two groups out of 29. The other 27 managed to negotiate with the government an agreement they felt was viable, and did so fairly and squarely. The demands of these two groups, however, go far