cluded that the government was right and that, under the circumstances, the 0–3–3 formula was justified, then we would have had an impartial judgment and we would probably have decided to support the government.

But, right from the beginning, this government had opted for confrontation. There were weak ones that could be attacked and they would be; the big ones at the top would not be disturbed, only the little ones at the bottom. The big ones are their friends. At least, I am proud to say that, in similar circumstances, we would have very likely followed Mr. McKenna's approach where 30 per cent salary increases were given to those at the bottom of the salary scale and 0 per cent to those with salaries above a certain level.

These premiers, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you, found themselves in a situation of mismanagement of this country's business by the government which had cut the transfer payments they needed for wage increases.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: But, in spite of the difficulties they experienced because of this government they came up with a much fairer solution than the one the government is offering us now.

[*English*]

I move, seconded by the member for Ottawa West:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and by substituting the following therefor:

This House declines to proceed with Bill C-29, an act respecting compensation in the public sector of Canada and to amend another act in relation thereto, the principle of which is to remove the longstanding rights of Canadian citizens to participate in free collective bargaining as agreed to by Canada in international conventions and as established by an act of Parliament and which principle is offensive to the House.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): This amendment is in order. Therefore resuming debate on the main motion and on the amendment. The hon. leader of the New Democratic Party.

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate today because we will in fact be setting a precedent for the future, a precedent about the rights of working people in this country, the government's employees, to free collective bargaining. It is also a debate about the government's obligation to respect the laws of the land, to respect the findings of its own bodies. It is also about workers being able simply to put food on the table and to live in dignity.

Today the minister said in his remarks that he is prepared to instruct his officials to begin negotiations again without preconditions. He also made other remarks about the fact that he clearly is not going to change his position on the 0 per cent wage increase. I think this requires clarification from the minister concerning exactly what the position of this government is. Through its actions and the legislation before us, this government is taking away the democratic right of collective bargaining of workers. It is treating its employees with contempt and it is denying its workers the income that they deserve.

That is why my party will not support this legislation. The New Democratic Party will not support the legislation. We cannot support a government that attacks the principles of Canadian democracy and the rights of Canadian workers because today it is these workers and tomorrow it is the rights of ordinary Canadians across the country.

This strike is causing hardship to people in this country and this government knows it. This government could have sat down at the negotiating table last week. This government could have sat down with the unions yesterday. This government could be sitting down with the unions right now. We know that farmers are suffering because of this strike. We know that it is very difficult for those in the west to have the grain shipments moved because of this strike. It is not that the union is working against the people of Canada, it is saying to this government: "We must stand up for our rights now or the rights of all Canadians will be taken away by a government that has no respect for democracy", as evidenced by this motion.

I want to say that we were with the Public Service Alliance right from the beginning and that we will continue to stand with working people in this country and we stand with them now. But I think it is important to put into context what the attack on the Public Service of this country means and exactly what it is that this