

such as the business of this country rather than wasting time on such frivolous things in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will listen to the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands, but I must say that unless he has very compelling arguments the Chair intends to rule that both questions raised by the hon. member for Ottawa South are not questions of privilege. That will probably be the ruling I will make and at the earliest possible opportunity I will give the reasons to the hon. member in the proper way. I will hear the member for Kingston and The Islands out of courtesy for the member.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of State for Privatization misunderstood the point. I just wanted to clarify it for the House. The letter that was sent was addressed to the Minister of State for Privatization, not to the Minister of Finance. I would not want the minister to think that my friend had not raised this issue at the earliest opportunity. The letter was delivered to him yesterday, the notice was sent to the House yesterday, I believe, or first thing this morning. It was at the earliest opportunity. The matter was raised properly and in an appropriate way.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT SERVICES RESUMPTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Gerald S. Merrithew (for the President of the Treasury Board) moved that Bill C-49, an act to provide for the resumption of certain government services, be read the third time and passed.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the minister's statement, Government Orders will be extended by 16 minutes as of one o'clock.

[English]

Mr. Howard Crosby (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as the House and probably many Canadians know, Bill C-49 has been before us for several days, having been introduced in the House of Commons on December 6, 1989. Each hour that the House delays the passage of this legislation

causes more difficulty and upset to Canadians, both in the health sector and in the marine transportation sector. However, it has been very clear that the need and desire for termination of this work stoppage has been recognized by the government and the government is proceeding to ensure that this legislation is passed and put into operation so Canadians can have the government services to which they are entitled in marine transportation and in hospital services.

In introducing the legislation to the House on December 6, the President of the Treasury Board made it abundantly clear that the presence of Bill C-49 and the back to work provisions would not prevent the negotiations being continued in order to reach a settlement of matters in dispute, both with respect to hospital workers and with respect to ships' crews, which are the two work groups affected by the current strike situation.

The President of the Treasury Board has made several attempts to have negotiations continued. There have in fact been negotiations taking place but to date no successful resolution has been arrived at, so we must proceed to pass Bill C-49 to terminate this situation.

Nobody, and certainly not the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Veterans Affairs or the Minister of Transport, who are the members of the ministry immediately involved in this matter, approach back to work to work legislation with any sense of relish. It is done in light of the need of Canada and Canadians to have government services and not to be deprived of those services for any protracted period of time.

It is important to note immediately that the ships' crews, who provide very valuable services through the Canadian Coast Guard, through fisheries patrol, through auxiliary vessels on behalf of the Department of National Defence and the Department of Public Works, have been on strike since November 14.

Hospital workers have been on strike since November 30, with the effects that has had on the services provided in hospitals under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I do not think there is any point in exacerbating the situation with rhetoric in the House of Commons and certainly no government member in the ministry would involve themselves in that pursuit. But it is important to underline the risks to Canadians and persons on the high seas and in our hospitals that occur in a strike of this kind