

most part women but some men among them as well, on an equal basis with the GS group". For almost seven years, from 1980, the government of this land did everything it could to avoid complying with that decision.

In July 1987, the government finally did what it should have done years previously, what it should have been forced to do previously, and paid the retroactive pay to these people. Since July 26, 1987, there have been no equalization adjustments until, wonder of wonders, November 1989. All of a sudden in November 1989, equalization payments started coming to these people again to make up for the payments they had not received since 1987.

Part of the decision of the Canadian Civil Rights Commission was that this kind of action had to be in consultation with the union, but without any consultation with the union on the conversion rates. Also, I think, not so strangely, the government has never put those equalization payments into wages. If the general services group was making \$1 an hour and the health services group was making only 50 cents, the government in order to equalize it would give them the 50 cents but not as part of wages. Those equalization payments—and I do not wish to be trivial about the amount—were 13 per cent and let us forget about the \$1 and the 50 cents part. The equalization payments are not a part of wages. The government refuses to put them into wages. Since 1980, even though these people have received retroactive pay, they are not a part of wages. Believe it or not, these people will not be receiving their pensions when they retire on the basis of what is justifiably a higher rate of pay, which it ought to be. The equalization payments do not form part of their earnings for the calculation of pensions. I cannot think of anything that is much more despicable than that.

• (1250)

Maybe we should not give them any pension at all. Would that be more despicable? Can one think of anything worse in relation to these people? I suppose the action we are taking right now is probably more despicable. One ought to be rather careful with one's choice of words, I suppose. It is certainly more despicable to be forcing these people back to work than not including the equalization payments in their wages. But to make such a comment as that is to trivialize a very serious matter.

Government Orders

The hospital services groups have other issues. They work 12 hour shifts, and because of an inability to come to some kind of agreement on the organization of shifts, these people often have to go back to work after only 8 hours of rest.

I am sorry I was not here for the President of the Treasury Board's entire introductory speech on the legislation. I suspect the government said that in order to be able to make sure the Canadian public was adequately protected as far as safety of navigation is concerned, or as far as health services in the veterans homes is concerned, it was essential to bring in this legislation.

The fact of the matter is, both the hospital services group and the ship's crews offered to provide the essential services.

If the government was so intent on designating 100 per cent of these employees as being essential, anything less than 100 per cent would probably not be acceptable. I think it ought to be pointed out that in the case of the ship's crews, the government has accepted the union's offer of supplying essential services. I do not have a list of all the essential services, all the emergencies the ship's crews have responded to since they went on strike. There have been innumerable cases where they have done that.

We will get to the hospital services group in a minute. Regarding the services that the ships' crews provided and the excellent behaviour they demonstrated, as well as the unions, I would like to point out that I was a striker a couple of times myself. In every instance we offered to provide essential services to the company and, as with the hospital services group, our employer turned it down. But that is not because we did not offer them.

As far as ship's crews are concerned there is absolutely no reason whatsoever for us to be here today arguing that these people ought to be forced back to work. I am more than pleased to be standing here arguing that they should not be. The group has behaved in an absolutely responsible manner. If one makes a comparison between the way the government has responded and the way these people have responded, there is no question that the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the ship's crews group have shown themselves to be absolutely trustworthy in so far as the Canadian public is concerned. They deserve a tremendous amount of credit for that.