

Routine Proceedings

Our discussions with union representatives have made good progress and I am hopeful that we can arrive at an agreement.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, today I am asking the leadership of the Public Service unions to go an extra mile with us in avoiding major disruption to the Canadian public this summer.

In my time as President of the Treasury Board, I have developed a great respect for them personally and for the system of collective bargaining that is one of the foundations of our Public Service. I know they share the priority that I give to maintaining the highest possible quality of service to the Canadian public.

I know too that the union leaders understand that the government will not deviate from the terms of the February 26 Budget, especially at a time when there is mounting evidence that we are on the right track and have the strong backing of Canadians for what we are seeking to do.

But I believe there continues to be real scope within the Budget to arrive at negotiated settlements that meet the needs of our employees. The government will introduce legislation if it must, but I would prefer to try to make the established institutions of staff relations work in these difficult times as well as they do in better circumstances.

[English]

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, in 1984 this government was elected on the illusory promises of fiscal responsibility, solving the economic problems of the country and jobs, jobs, jobs. Seven years later 1.5 million Canadians are unemployed, the debt and the interest it is costing have more than doubled, and the nation has been in an unnecessary, made-in-Canada recession created by this government. Canadians have been realizing for some time that the Emperor has no clothes, no vision and certainly no economic plan.

Today's statement is the culmination of the government's abject failure to meet its commitment to Canadians, to provide them with good government with quality services at an affordable price.

The statement today appears, like so much the government has done, on an *ad hoc* basis, decided at the last minute, thrown before Parliament without adequate forethought. In fact, as the person expected to reply to this motion, I heard that from the press that this statement would be made, not from the minister's office.

Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board presented a package of so-called reform and revitalization of the Public Service. I must remind the minister and Canadians that this has been the foremost Public Service in the world, up until recently.

He said that this bill would help Public Service employees to concentrate on service to citizens rather than serving systems. He added that Canadians expect a Public Service that is effective and up to date, which is staffed and led by Canada's ablest men and women.

In this statement today the same minister has shown that he has no understanding of how to build commitment, competence and progressive thinking and service to the public in the Public Service of Canada.

I marvel at the minister's audacity to stand up again, in a final display of disregard, on the eve of the recess of Parliament. It is a display of disregard for workers' rights, threatening to call Parliament back, threatening to introduce legislation when he cannot negotiate a zero increase this year, even threatening to override the decisions of impartial third party adjudicators.

• (1620)

The minister says he has a desire to continue collective bargaining, an admirable statement. The minister should bargain with the unions at the table, and not on the floor of the House of Commons.

May I interject on a point of order? I am finding it increasingly difficult to speak with the rabble going on around me.