

I might also point out to the hon. member that in addition to that, our public servants enjoy benefits that people in the private sector do not enjoy, including those of dental care, health care, eye glasses and things like that. They do get raises if they are not at the top of their category. If they start and they are within the period of time moving from the beginning wage up to their category, they get an anniversary raise. I would dare say that there are some people right now on the picket line who have or are about to receive their raise when they come back to work.

So it is not quite fair to say that we are dealing with apples and apples. When we look at poor people or people living on less than living wage in the private sector compared to those who are lowly paid in the public sector, I think the public sector have a fair advantage.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, the hon. member may never have referred to people who work for the federal government as fat cats, but I wonder if the hon. member remembers sending me a note in the House last June when Mr. Loiselle announced that if there was no settlement between Treasury Board and the alliance by September that he would impose one. The note said: "Joy, everyone in Canada, including many public servants, agrees with the government on this matter. Your opposition is just helping us. Canadians are sick of seeing their tax dollars go toward protecting well paid employees of government. So you and Daryl keep it up, you are both winning us votes." It was signed Dorothy.

The hon. member on Friday on CBC radio in Winnipeg could not remember that memo and I would be happy to provide a copy of it to the hon. member. I would hope that she would stand in this House and remember it and not try to tell us that a Dorothy from some other place, possibly Oz, wrote this memo.

Mrs. Dobbie: Madam Speaker, as the member stands in her seat, I recall writing her a facetious note last June when she was in the midst of one of her usual rhetorical speeches characterizing, in her usual exaggerated way, the activities of the government against those of the Public Service. Mr. Bean, at that point had, without even going to the negotiating table, told the public that he would not negotiate and that he would defy the govern-

Government Orders

ment and that he would take his members out on strike. He challenged us and I responded.

• (1640)

As far as my comments are concerned, as I said they were facetious and if they offend anybody, I am fully willing to retract anything that would be offensive, but I do think they are quite true. The majority of Canadians are not in favour of this strike. The majority of Canadians would like to see us use a little restraint, as I have just spent the past 20 minutes pointing out. The majority of Canadians want to see a government strong enough and honest enough to do what is right. I cannot retract those words because I think they are just as correct now as they were then.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member if she agrees that in the event of a dispute between two parties that the two parties have an option to either go to arbitration or to go to court. In this particular situation the government, by refusing to go to arbitration, is admitting that it is in the wrong.

I also want to ask her if she would agree with the member for Lanark—Carleton, who on Friday called the public servants fat cats. Would she agree that the hon. member, as a member of the cabinet, should retract that statement?

Would she not agree that pay equity, morale, lack of resources and contracting out are very important subjects for the government to look at in the very near future and that it has failed to do so in the past?

Finally, would the hon. member not agree that it is extremely important before we start cutting the salaries of the public servants, especially those at the lowest end, and before we start cutting jobs all across the board, that the federal government should somehow make an assessment to find out whether we have a surplus of public servants?

Just for the information of members, I would like to add that contracting out in terms of term employees and part-time employees has increased dramatically over the past five years, which leads the public and me to believe that there is no surplus of public servants. I would suggest that it is very positive for the government to do a proper assessment to see what we have in terms of public servants and what we really need. In my view, it will find out there is a shortage.