

Adjournment Debate

In this letter I also asked the minister to use his services to expedite the bargaining situation and to get on with it. The striking ships' crews were providing emergency services, yet the government was trying to intimate that these people were behaving in an irresponsible manner. I would like to point out that the hospital services workers, subsequently having offered to provide services during the strike, were turned down. This brought great distress particularly to people in veterans' homes.

• (1905)

I would like to point out that even though the government did not avail itself of the offer, those people who later went on strike went to the different hospitals in the communities to succour veterans and inhabitants of these homes in order that the distress which they experienced because the government had moved them out of their homes was not too severe. This was much appreciated by the families of the veterans involved, I would point out.

I certainly did not receive any answer from the minister, and I still have not received an answer. I asked for many other things as well with respect to that whole bargaining. We have received very, very few answers other than the back to work legislation brought in by closure.

I see my time has expired.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to put my hon. friend out of his misery.

The government has been engaged in collective bargaining for the ships' crews group for approximately two years. From January 1988 until March of 1989 many bargaining sessions were held both directly with the union bargaining team and with the assistance of mediators appointed to assist the parties.

In March 1989 the ships' crews group as well as 26 others reached agreement with the employer. These settlements were reached voluntarily and were submitted to the union membership for the ratification. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the union bargaining team voluntarily accepted the settlement, the ships' crews membership did not. Since the spring of 1989 the parties have met on many occasions in an attempt to

reach a settlement on the outstanding issues, but all to no avail.

In October and November of 1989 the ships' crews group was engaged in conciliation efforts with an independently appointed conciliation board. This conciliation board could not bring about an agreement between the parties and in fact made no recommendations for a settlement because the parties were so far apart.

In addition to the aforementioned efforts further mediation attempts were made in December, 1989. The Treasury Board, for example, offered a comprehensive settlement position but the union bargaining team rejected this offer and continued to demand a settlement that would be far too high for any reasonable and responsible employer to accept.

It is important to note that the employer's settlement position in December rejected by the union included parity of wages for eastern and western based ships' crews effective the date of signing of a new collective agreement. This delivered on a commitment made in the House by the President of the Treasury Board to provide wage parity for this group of employees. In addition, this commitment of the employer has been confirmed in writing to the chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board for use in the forthcoming conciliation board process.

Despite the employer's undertaking to achieve wage parity, the union continued to insist on substantially greater monetary improvement. This is precisely why Bill C-49 was required. It put into place a fair and equitable process for resolving the outstanding issues. The parties will have an opportunity to present their respective positions to an independent conciliation board that will have the authority to render a binding decision to resolve the outstanding issues should that become necessary.

FISHERIES

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, when I first raised this question and then gave notice that I was not satisfied with the answer, I had no idea that the Prime Minister this very day in this House would help me demonstrate just how dissatisfied I was and why I am so dissatisfied.

People around this country by now have seen that answer from the Prime Minister. There is, he says, no crisis. He says that the people in Atlantic Canada ought to be grateful. Grateful? Grateful for what from this particular government? For shutting down communities? For gutting UI? For gutting job creation? For allowing