

*Government Orders*

• (1120)

The Canadian Human Rights Commissioner, the chief of equal pay, confirmed that this government's idea of pay equity contributions are half the rate that other major public employers in Canadian and American jurisdictions are granting.

Since 1990 this government has twice attempted to block in the federal courts the Canadian Human Rights Commission from investigating the pay equity situation. Twice it has tried to block it.

Commissioner Max Yalden said last month that the federal government is not playing fair with striking Public Service employees. He found it, and I quote, "very strange that the government is still trying to kill a human rights tribunal set up to resolve the pay equity issue", while at the same time he is telling striking employees that this issue should be dealt with by the tribunal and not at the bargaining table.

Just what is the government playing at and why is it playing with the lives, the health and the incomes of low wage earners and their families?

In early 1990 the Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service, which was chaired by Senator Pat Carney, released a report. Among the documentation that it presented, it showed that 75 per cent of all women in the Public Service are concentrated in four fairly low paying job groups: secretarial, clerical, administrative and program management. It also found that women tend to be compressed at the lower echelon of even these classifications. In other words, they are not even the heads of their own job ghettos.

Job security is a big issue for women in the Public Service. Twenty per cent of all women Public Service employees are in term positions, 60 per cent of all the term positions are held by women. This makes them more vulnerable to lay-offs and less likely to receive benefits.

The data show that the federal government is an extremely poor employer of women. It has taken advantage of women employees over years and years and done very little to advance equality of any kind.

We have seen this government pull stunts like this before. It imposed back to work legislation on female

federal hospital workers in 1989 instead of negotiating pay equity with them. This was in spite of a 1987 Canadian Human Rights decision in favour of the female dominated hospital service workers.

I want to return to some other lovely words that were said by the Prime Minister during the 1988 election campaign, during the leaders' debate that was televised across the country and I quote: "We are agreeing on a policy of pay equity for women. We are budgeting for the funds required on an ongoing basis to make sure that they are available so that this money will be given to those women who have been deprived of the degree of equality that we seek. The money is being budgeted so that when the agreement is reached it will be there to close the gap. The commitment is there and the money is there. We are beginning at home. We are getting our own shop in order", he said, "I think that this would be, once it is done, an excellent model for the public sector. I think we have to do it properly ourselves and then see if and how we can work it out with the private sector".

Where is that money now, that money that was budgeted for, that money that was set aside? Where is that commitment now? How many more years will it take before the government gets its own shop in order?

We have seen governments that deal with this issue fairly. The Ontario New Democrat government extended pay equity to groups of women in female job ghettos who were excluded from the previous government's policy. One of the very first actions of the Ontario government was to drop the previous government's pay equity court case against nurses and guarantee pay equity for the nurses. It is meeting its pay equity adjustments for public sector workers. Ontario in fact has the most far-reaching pay equity system in North America.

It does not just cover the cost of the public sector, but the private sector under provincial jurisdiction as well.

This government cannot even handle its own public sector. It refuses to negotiate pay equity with its workers. This government should follow the example that has already been set out for it by the government in Ontario.

Pay equity is an issue that affects every woman in Canada. Every battle that is fought brings the reality of pay equity for work of equal value just a little closer for