

Government Orders

Then he said: "In case of an accident—". What has the government done "in case of an accident"? How has it let things get to this stage?

The minister even went so far as to suggest that the member for Kingston and other members along the Seaway might talk to the members from Ottawa and tell them that it may be a big thrill to hold up legislation that puts people back to work, but if you live somewhere where there is risk at sea, you might have a better appreciation for it.

I wonder what kind of big thrill the government, the Minister of Justice, the President of the Treasury Board and the parliamentary secretary who spoke to us this morning are getting out of hammering people who are earning \$16,000, \$17,000, \$18,000 and \$19,000 a year, withholding from them salaries that they are entitled to, salaries to feed and clothe and house their children properly. Is the thrill of the exercise of power so tantalizing that you cannot even see justice in the situation, that you cannot move to give these people justice? Are you prepared to risk the shipment of grains from the prairies? Are you prepared to risk a chemical transport ship in the St. Lawrence? Are you prepared to risk, hon. parliamentary secretary, those people setting out on the high seas from your own community?

I have to ask: where has the Minister of Transport been in all of this? He was not allowed to come before the legislative committee. How strong were the submissions he made to the President of the Treasury Board about the need to settle this strike? Was he anticipating the closure of the Seaway? Was he anticipating more than 100 ships being trapped in the St. Lawrence Seaway or in the Great Lakes at a cost of millions of dollars a day? How did he think he was going to cope with that when he was standing here telling the House that there was no problem with safety and security.

We did not hear from the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Where has he been for the last two years? Has he been encouraging the President of the Treasury Board to settle this strike? Has he been speaking on behalf of the people who run his department's veterans homes? Where has he been while these workers have been dragged through the courts instead of being at a negotiating table and dealt with fairly?

The Minister of Justice, in what my grandmother liked to call "high dudgeon" says: "I did not want to speak for so long." Well, I don't either, Mr. Speaker, but I am going to. The Minister of Justice said: "I got incensed at the insensitivity of members opposite". Where is the sensitivity of the members on that side of the House? Where is the sensitivity of members toward workers who have won the legal right through the Human Rights Commission to equitable pay and still do not have it two years after that Human Rights Commission decision?

The Minister was talking about "political posturing, which may gain some points in Ottawa". If we have ever seen political posturing there has been two years of it through these negotiations and through these people not having a contract settled with their employer, the Government of Canada. There has been political posturing that promises, tantalizingly, that there will be a settlement of this pay equity issue. There has been political posturing, dragging the issue through the courts instead of sitting down and solving it. There has been political posturing that somehow the government thinks the public of this country will support that the lowest paid workers in the federal public service are going to continue to be underpaid, are going to continue to be paid less than colleagues doing exactly the same work. And not a little bit less, but an average of \$3,000 a year less.

One person involved in that human rights tribunal settlement was paid \$40,000. That is the amount by which that person had been underpaid. That is the amount of money that family had been deprived of and, despite that human rights tribunal ruling, members opposite are quite content to sit there and let that unfairness and that inequity go on, to let those workers continue to be deprived of a fair wage level to which they are entitled. Now that is political posturing.

• (1600)

The minister wondered at the stalling of the opposition parties. We are not talking about stalling. We are talking about a few days of honest and fair debate on this matter. Stalling? I will move on to stalling in a moment and the people can be the judge of who is stalling.

The government has moved closure at every stage of this bill. It has moved time allocation, and used every rule it can use to limit debate to as little time as it can possibly get away with. We are not stalling. We are not the ones who have been sitting at the bargaining table and playing with people's lives. We are not the ones who have been taking people to court and delaying that whole