

*Government Orders*

ment for these workers. It spent that time trying to bypass the legal rights of workers instead of settling a contract.

• (1550)

Let there be no mistake. It is the government's inability to manage, its failure to meet its responsibilities as an employer, and its failure to anticipate and plan for possible disruptions in service which have led to this sorry state and this undemocratic bill before us today.

The aim of the Official Opposition has not been to obstruct the passage of this bill unduly, but unlike other times when back to work legislation was before this House we have certainly chosen not to expedite it. Indeed, since last week we have made every effort to moderate this unacceptable bill, to improve it, to have the government send a clear message to these valued workers that as undesirable, unacceptable and undemocratic as this bill is, at last it is prepared to come to a just and reasonable settlement.

Knowing as we do that the government has the voting power to make the passage of this bill at 6 p.m tomorrow night inevitable, we have been trying to put in place the best possible framework, or let us say the least damaging framework, that would at least give the workers a half decent chance of getting a fair settlement.

The government has used every tool at its disposal, including closure and time allocation, to limit debate on this bill. It has failed to anticipate problems. It has failed to solve problems. Now it is trying to force people back to work because of its own mistakes and incompetence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we know that these employees are being forced to return to work in a poisoned atmosphere, rightly convinced that the government does not understand their work and does not value them, convinced that the government absolutely refuses to propose anything but a mean-spirited, intransigent settlement.

[*English*]

I urge the President of Treasury Board to accept these motions, including the ones that have been moved by myself and others on the Order Paper, to send to the

workers a clear signal that he personally will take responsibility for seeing a just settlement to this strike.

[*Translation*]

I ask the President of the Treasury Board to make his negotiators understand that he wants to reach an agreement in keeping with the demonstrated value of the work done by these employees.

[*English*]

I speak specifically to the content of these motions that have been just moved and to put them in the context of the others on the Order Paper that will be moved. I think it is important to note that nurses from Ste. Anne de Bellevue hospital in Montreal have come here by the dozens today to support the hospital services workers; not their union but workers they work with every day who they know deliver essential and valuable services.

They have seen these people out on the picket lines in the freezing cold over the last two weeks and they know how much suffering this strike is causing. They know that these people have been waiting for pay equity for two years.

The first group of motions I moved may seem to be technical and may seem to be window-dressing to some members of this House. They change the word "chairman" in this bill to the word "chair" because women are tired of having every position of power and authority in this country and in our laws expressed in male terms.

Those kinds of attitudes creep into this bill that support income inequity for women which is at the heart of one issue of the strike of these hospital services workers. This government has refused to implement the fair pay that the human rights tribunal has determined that these people are entitled to. Even in the last week the President of the Treasury Board has failed to ensure that the matter of pay equity is referred to the conciliation boards being established with this piece of legislation before us today.

The matter of pay equity will be before the House shortly under several motions to be moved by my colleague and one I believe to be moved by myself. The government has known for two years that the issue of pay equity is fundamental to these hospital service workers being able to accept an agreement.