

Government Orders

consideration and disposal of proceedings at this stage of the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Kamloops on a point of order, knowing that there is no question or comment period.

Mr. Riis Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I simply want to say at the outset that the discussions regarding Standing Order 72 have not been completed. I just want to make that point clear.

• (1040)

Because of the importance of the presentation of the President of the Treasury Board this morning in terms of laying out where we are in this very critical issue, could I ask him to repeat very briefly his opening statement regarding the return to the bargaining table that he has now instructed his officials to do, particularly the point of no preconditions.

It is such a critical point. It is not a question. I am simply asking him to restate that short part of his presentation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Loiselle: I apologize to the hon. member. I am quite prepared to repeat this section, which is a very brief two or three paragraphs.

I said that I wanted at the outset to address an issue that has an important bearing on this bill. The Public Service Staff Relations Board stated yesterday that the government has not made every reasonable effort in the meaning of Section 51 of the Public Service Staff Relations Act to negotiate the collective agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

I am of the view that all our negotiations with the unions have complied with the law. The PSSRB's decision on the PSAC negotiations surprised me since we have been able to reach settlements with four other unions that are within the government's announced wage policy. In the case of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, we have had 60 days of negotiating sessions and have gone through another 30 days of conciliation proceedings.

Mr. Bean even said he was suspicious that we might have made deals with the other unions. Of course we did and we are prepared to make deals with him also. He refused them. Nevertheless, in order to make absolutely

certain that we respect yesterday's ruling of the PSSRB, I have instructed my officials to indicate to Mr. Bean that they are willing to return to the bargaining table without preconditions. With respect to the issue of a wage increase, this government remains irrevocably committed to the zero and three formula included in Bill C-29.

Let it be clearly understood that there shall be no wage increase this year and the wage increase next year will be 3 per cent.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today at a extremely critical time in Canada's history. Our country is in great difficulty. No one is providing any leadership at all. Today, we are faced with what is probably the greatest strike the Public Service of Canada has ever known. It may not be as big as the Winnipeg strike in 1919 or the construction strike in Quebec in 1976, but it certainly marks a turning point, because there is a big difference: This is the first time we have a strike because the government decided there was going to be one. This is not a matter of collective bargaining. When we look at this government's strategy, it was obvious that it wanted public servants to hit the streets. It is a strategy we cannot condone.

As I said yesterday, our presence here in the House of Commons is useless. Everything that could be done, the government could have done last week. We made a suggestion to the government which was taken up yesterday by the union. If it had wanted a mediator, if it had wanted to observe the laws of this country and negotiate and use every means at its disposal, it could have had everyone back to work at this very moment. It could have had everyone back to work last week.

When I said yesterday that if we put everything on the table with a mediator, and when I spoke directly to 20,000 union members on Parliament Hill, everyone applauded when I said: You don't want a strike because you like the idea. What you want is a fair deal, the same as everybody else. However, this is a government that wants confrontation.

[English]

This government does not want to solve the problems. It thrives on confrontation all the time. It is not the problem of looking at the deficit figure that is the preoccupation of this government today. It does not look