

*Government Orders*

this contract had to conform with the other contracts in place in the Public Service of Canada.

We had discussions, and I would not have referred to them in the House today if the parliamentary secretary had not done so. I am going to put on the record what happened in those discussions.

We had discussions throughout Monday to say: "Look, if you will accept these amendments which at the legislative committee you agreed were reasonable, but which we just did not have time to consider the details of, then we are prepared to expedite passage of this bill. We are prepared to agree that it can go through quickly and that the ships can be put back to work, the people can get back to work in the veterans' homes and hospitals with a bill that is not good, not acceptable, not palatable—that is in fact outrageous after the government's two years of bungling—but they can get back to work with a bill that at least gives them a chance of coming out with a decent settlement".

These issues were all agreed to on Monday. We felt that we had achieved for those workers out there changes to this bill that were going to give them at least a half decent chance of getting a fair settlement, not something that was imposed by conciliation boards dominated by government appointees. Do you know what one sticking point was, Mr. Speaker? The President of the Treasury Board was not prepared to unequivocally say that the matter of pay equity was before the conciliation board. This is the question of the wage equity that these people have been waiting for since 1981.

• (1640)

These are the amendments that the government members opposite voted against yesterday. The amendments recognized the bargaining agent as a party to the agreement and set up a fair conciliation board where all parties agree on whom the chair will be. These amendments recognized that all parties are equal in that process. They would have set up a situation in which there would be pay equity, and would get rid of an open-ended section that could have had the contract go on for five, six, seven, eight or nine years unlike contracts in the rest of the Public Service.

The people who really blew it for the workers in this case are the members of the New Democratic Party. I regret very much that members of the New Democratic

Party, knowing that this bill was going to go through by tonight at the latest, were not prepared to say: "We want to get a bill that is better for the workers. We want pay equity on the table. We want the issue of parity between the east coast and the west coast off the table. We want that settled and not a matter for negotiation. It is a matter of right. We want to see a matter for a balanced conciliation board."

We resent that they chose not to send a member of Parliament into those negotiations, but that they chose to send a staff person. That will never happen again.

We resent that the Leader of the New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia was misrepresenting the nature of those negotiations to a couple of hundred ships crews workers in Halifax earlier this week. We resent that the New Democrats were implying—and I want this on the record—that the Liberal opposition was talking to the government without them being involved at all. We had no negotiations and no discussions that they were not involved in. They misled the leader of their party in Nova Scotia. She, in turn, unknowingly misled the ships' crews workers in Halifax.

Those ships' crews workers know who has been standing up in this House fighting for them long before their strike even started.

I regret very much that the members of the government yesterday chose to be vindictive by saying: "We didn't get our way and so we're not going to agree to amendments that we know are perfectly reasonable, perfectly rational, fair and just." They chose to say: "We're going to take our bats and balls and go home because we didn't get our way." That is wrong.

They know those amendments were right. When vindictiveness gets to the point where the minister responsible for the status of women can sit there and not support a motion that is in favour of the issue of pay equity being put before a conciliation board, which is the only place it can be included, then I wonder who in this Parliament and who in this government speaks for the women of Canada and is responsible for the status of women in Canada.

The arrogance, the vindictiveness and the meanness of this government throughout these negotiations and its willingness to pick on the most vulnerable people has