

Government Orders

anywhere in this country, it is because of this government. It is not because of the opposition in this House.

• (1300)

We raised in this House the question of safety and security. My colleague from Leeds—Grenville pointed out to the minister the very specific problem of navigational buoys in the St. Lawrence Seaway and the fact that if an effort was not made to settle the strike, millions of dollars worth of equipment were at risk in the St. Lawrence Seaway, the value of which is far greater than the cost of settling this strike with the ships' crews workers.

Mr. Speaker, may I clarify that I may resume after lunch?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brightwell): Perhaps the hon. member does not realize that the sitting will be extended by 16 minutes because of Ministers' Statements and she may proceed until 1.16 p.m.

Mrs. Catterall: I recognize that, but I understand I may continue after lunch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brightwell): Yes, by all means.

Mrs. Catterall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, my colleague from Leeds—Grenville did point out to the government that \$6 million worth of navigational aids were at stake, safe navigation in the St. Lawrence Seaway was at stake, if the government did not act quickly to settle this problem. The government chose to ignore that.

I am not sure why the hon. parliamentary secretary is today saying that the opposition seems unaware of the problems that are being created by this strike. We seem to have been the ones to tell the government of the problems that were being created by this strike.

One of my colleagues from Prince Edward Island warned the minister in the House of the dangers of harbours freezing up, of the costs to commerce of that happening off Prince Edward Island and of the dependence of Prince Edward Island on keeping the sea channel open to the mainland. It seems that the members opposite do not remember that when winter comes, water freezes and it is necessary to anticipate problems, to be sure that the people who perform the work of

keeping our sea lanes open and safe are there to do their jobs. I am sure if the government had realized that, it would have made some effort to act like a good manager and to negotiate a settlement that would be acceptable to their workers and a fairer recognition of the work they do.

We also raised with the Minister of Transport the question of safety and security when we realized that winter was coming on, the strike was still on, and there was no movement on behalf of the government to meet any of the needs of these workers for a settlement which they could accept with some dignity and some assurance that it would allow them to provide for their families adequately. In spite of the fact that the ice was creeping out on the St. Lawrence River, various harbours were starting to freeze over, what did the Minister of Transport say? The Minister of Transport said, "There is no problem with safety and security". He sloughed off our suggestions that the strike needed to be brought to a quick and speedy end with some movement by the government at the negotiating table. We asked the President of the Treasury Board about safety and security and he said, "There is no problem with safety and security. We have contingency plans in place; everything is under control".

We know now what the contingency plan was. It was, "Don't deal with the issue. Don't deal with the situation of the sea lanes and the harbours. Just pull back to work legislation out of your back pocket and force people back to work. Don't act like a responsible employer who is concerned about your employees and concerned about the service you are offering to the people of Canada. Just stonewall at every opportunity, walk away from the table". How often have we heard the President of the Treasury Board in this House stand at his seat and say, "We are ready to go back to the negotiating table. The union just has to come back to us."

Whose responsibility is it to make sure that collective agreements are in place, that workers are at work doing their jobs and earning a decent living for doing it? It is not the union's responsibility. It is not the opposition's responsibility. It is the responsibility of the government. It is the responsibility of the President of the Treasury Board, when he sees that things are going off the track, to take a hands-on approach and make sure that things