

*Government Orders*

members during Question Period in this very Chamber only yesterday.

If the welfare of Canadians and the faith of the economic recovery do not concern the PSAC leadership, they concern me greatly. Commuters and ordinary Canadians living in the national capital region had this brought home to them this morning.

PSAC picketing has become disruptive without regard to the law or the rights and livelihood of members of the public to get to and from work on public transit.

[*Translation*]

The union has increasingly resorted to insults and intimidation, even going so far as to call some of its own members good for nothing. Yesterday, Alliance strikers threw eggs and tomatoes at nursing staff of the Ste. Anne-de-Bellevue hospital, although, Mr. Speaker, these designated employees had to report to work because public safety requires it. They are not even in the same union.

Mr. Speaker, it is most regrettable that many Alliance members who have chosen to continue to work, as is their right, have been harassed and threatened by their own union which, lacking logical means of persuasion, has tried desperately in this way to rally their support for a futile strike.

Many employees, Mr. Speaker, understand the justification of the government's salary policy because they see it in the broader economic context and realize that it is useless to lose several weeks of pay. I am convinced that most Alliance members, who are law-abiding citizens, will want to put these points of view across to their union leaders.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is in the interest of all public servants, including members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, for members of all parties to recognize that this important bill must be passed as soon as possible, if we want to end the strike once and for all.

[*English*]

I would now like to summarize some of the principal elements of this bill and to briefly go over the rationale

as to why this government feels the wage restraint must play its part in securing and enduring economic recovery.

Anyone who has followed this issue over the last several weeks will attest that the government has taken the more difficult path to achieve wage restraint. Expediency has not driven this government. Why is that?

It is because, despite the commentary of some opposition members to the contrary, this government respects the collective bargaining process and respects as well the rights and views of union members.

It would have been so easy to have chosen the simple way and legislated the wage restraint program immediately after it was announced as previous federal and some provincial governments have done.

Needless to say, the government's legal advisers examined jurisprudence in this respect to determine whether the legislative method of securing wage restraint was a viable course to take and could be justified and defended as an approach given.

I am assured that it is and that it can be given the economic conditions that have given rise to the decision.

Before resorting to legislation, I was determined to appeal to the unions to think through and come to understand the government's reasoning in limiting wage increases. I wanted to communicate to them how wage restraint can eliminate the principal fuel of inflation and reduce the incentive for price increases. I wanted an opportunity to demonstrate to union leadership that they and their members were not being singled out for harsh treatment by the government. I told them, I know, that zero and 3 per cent would be hard to accept and was not a true reflection of what their members' contribution to Canada was worth.

• (1030)

Nevertheless, I wanted them to understand that hundreds of thousands of Canadians have paid a far higher price during the recent recession. They had lost their jobs or they had taken big pay cuts and given back benefits in an effort to keep their employer afloat and maintain jobs.

I wanted to persuade union leaders that every sector, every Canadian had a part to play in the economic recovery and every Canadian would benefit because of it.