

Government Orders

for miserable, lousy wages that this government should be ashamed to pay.

We have heard about the problems being created by this strike. We are well aware of the problems being created by this strike. Those problems are on the head of this government because it refuses to treat its employees with decency, with dignity and with the respect of sitting down across from them at the bargaining table with a determination to reach a just settlement.

Private sector employers are learning lessons that this government needs to learn, that bargaining with people and a co-operative relationship with your workers is more productive, more satisfying and a more profit-producing way to go than to hammer them with your power. This government needs to learn that lesson, but it has not. It prefers to treat this like a game in which winning is more important than solving problems.

I do not know who gets the kicks out of this. I do not understand the President of the Treasury Board sitting in this chamber saying: "I am waiting for the union to call me. All they have to do is pick up the phone". He is the employer. It is his responsibility. It is several ministers' responsibility to make sure that service to the Canadian public continues and that people are paid a decent wage for the work they do.

The government has created this problem. I do not think it is fooling anybody when the problem has been in its hands for over two years. It has known it was there. It has chosen to do nothing. It has chosen to waste taxpayers' dollars going to court. It has chosen to leave ships tied up on the Seaway and on the Great Lakes to the tune of \$2 million a day. It has chosen to waste \$6 million worth of navigational aids on the Seaway by having them destroyed by ice rather than getting people back to work.

I doubt if many members on the opposite side even know that this will cause problems this spring when the Department of Transport will not have enough navigational aids in the spring to start the ships moving through the Seaway. It is irresponsible to suggest that the responsibility for that lies anywhere except with the government side of this House.

Despite this and despite the fact that normally the opposition would not support back to work legislation, but at least assist its quick passage, we have chosen not to do that. We have done that because we know it is the

government's fault that this situation has arisen. We will not co-operate in the breakdown of collective bargaining in the public service.

We did have discussions with the government and the other party in opposition about how we could expedite this legislation and try to use the seriousness of the situation to try to get this legislation improved to the point where we would be prepared to give up a few hours of debate and let it go through. The government failed to do that.

I want to spend just a couple of minutes on the amendments that were wanted to this legislation, amendments that the union representing these employees wanted.

Very simply, it wanted recognition of the bargaining agent as the party to the collective agreement. The government somehow forgot and left that out. In the legislation it sets up the individual employees as the other party with the employer to the collective agreement. That is not what the courts have ruled. The Public Service Alliance wanted what it believed to be an oversight corrected. We thought the government was agreeable to that, that, in fact, it was an oversight and it should be corrected.

The union wanted the ability, which is theirs legally, to agree to the chair of the conciliation board. They did not want to go into a situation where the government had picked two out of the three members of the board. For heaven's sake, who would go into a stacked game like that?

If the government had any fairness and any willingness to send these people back to work with a shred of hope that they might be able to get a decent settlement out of this binding conciliation process, it would have agreed to that.

It would have agreed that the matter of pay equity would be referred to this conciliation board. But it did not.

It would have agreed that parity between the east and west coast workers would be settled before this conciliation board started its work.

It would have agreed that this contract should not be allowed to go on for whatever indeterminate period and it would have amended that clause to make it clear that