

Government Orders

without them and that is why it is choosing to force them back to work in an arbitrary manner.

During Question Period this morning I was absolutely astounded by the scandalous attitude portrayed by ministers of the government when they were being asked questions about the lack of government action to assist farmers in this country and the way they answered. It has to enrage people from one end of the country to the other when they suggested, "You cannot be interested in helping farmers or else you would force these other people back to work in order to get the grain moving". That is absolutely unacceptable. That is playing one group off against the other in an attempt to cover up your own failure to deal with either problem.

I do not know how we can appeal to the conscience of a government that engages in that kind of thuggery. But I would hope at least it would recognize that it is its responsibility to carry through this legislation in at least the most acceptable manner possible. One of the ways it could do that would be to accept this motion. That would at least give the employees within these two sectors the feeling that they were being listened to and that the kind of processes we have used before would be used to set out procedures to choose the chairs of the conciliation boards that are going to be dealing with their very legitimate grievances so that they will be appointed in a fair and impartial manner. That is all we are asking for by this motion. It will make a bad action somewhat more palatable.

I hope the government has enough common sense in spite of all its bungling prior to this time to accept this motion with the grace with which it is presented.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, the letters and calls of support received in various members' offices, both government and opposition alike, lead me to conclude that the overwhelming majority of Canadians support these public servants in their efforts to attain pay equity. So what do we have? Once again we have this government surrounded by its friends in big business taking on the rest of Canada. The honest worker, the labourer, finds him and herself in a fight with govern-

ment and big business. To add insult to injury the government wants to limit the debate on this question.

The government is in fact saying: "We will force these people back to work regardless of what anyone wants and we will do it without having to listen to your objections one instant longer than we have to."

At stake here are several important principles. The principle I would like to talk about first is the principle of pay equity.

We heard today the sorry state of pay equity in this country and the number of companies under the supposedly active legislation which do not even have the fortitude or the ability to stand up in Canada today and say: "Yes, we are implementing true pay equity."

We have a Royal Commission report that every member of parliament should read. I refer of course to the Abella report on employment equity. In that report Judge Abella called for employment equity legislation with teeth. That is not what we received. It is certainly not what the members of the Public Service who are on strike today are going to receive when this legislation is rammed through the House of Commons.

The question of the women seeking pay equity—pay equity that the Human Rights Commission has already stated they deserve—is something that has become nothing more than a national disgrace. Women in this country still make 67 cents for every dollar men make. That, Mr. Speaker, is when you add into the equation professional women, women running their own businesses and, yes, women who are members of Parliament and cabinet ministers.

• (1720)

When you take out of the equation women, in whatever small numbers, who are in the higher salary levels, women in this country make 50 cents for every dollar men make.

In this country today, a woman with a university education or a professional degree, such as a registered nurse, can expect to make the same as a man who dropped out of high school in grade 10. Where is the fairness, where is the equity in this situation for the women of Canada?