

Government Orders

So what does this mean for the lowest-paid people who enter the public service? They want to rise in the public service. They apply for new positions, but if they obtain one, their salary is frozen. That was not the case when the previous government froze public servants' salaries.

So the lowest-paid people in the public service are penalized. I am surprised to hear the hon. member praise such dictatorial action taken against public servants.

• (1230)

I ask the hon. member who just spoke if it was one of your election promises. During the election campaign, you never talked about attacking the public service. But it is typical of the Liberal Party to do the opposite when it takes power.

We will remember the wage freeze in the Trudeau years, against Stanfield. He promised that he would never freeze salaries, but Stanfield, during the election campaign, wanted to freeze them. Six months later, the Liberals froze salaries.

What is really going on? The Conservative and Liberal policies are exactly the same. In fact, the Liberal policy is even worse in this case, in terms of thrust and dictatorship over the public service with the salary freeze, the total lack of negotiations and the denial of the right to strike. What good is the right to negotiate if it is denied before even beginning and if new rules are imposed by orders in council?

You referred to possible discussions concerning women in the public service, because they are the most discriminated against by this measure, but you are prepared to discuss after the fact. You allude to consultations after saying: "This is it: salaries are frozen and programs are cut. Do your share". I ask the hon. member: Why is the sacrifice which you are asking from civil servants and unemployed people so great—we are talking billions of dollars, here—when you do not ask the rich to make a sacrifice too?

You are considering looking into tax havens. We all know that 16 billion dollars are hidden in tax havens every year; this represents hundreds and hundreds of millions! But no! You would rather protect the rich, who finance your party as well as the Conservative Party. You should have denounced this situation as soon as you took office; you should have told these people that they would have to pay taxes like everyone else. Why do you not go after these people? Make them do their share, with their hundreds of millions!

They are not doing it! It is easy to force the unemployed, the poor and the civil servants to do their share. This is what is not logical in the hon. member's argument. What is her government doing about tax havens, family trusts, and rich families who resort to lobbying? It was mentioned in an article that Prime Minister Mulroney had been the victim of the lobby representing rich families. The same is true in the case of the current

Prime Minister: He is a victim of the same lobbying by rich families.

Why do these people have the right to carry over their family trusts, right down to the youngest survivor? In 1972, the act provided that 21 years later, in 1991, an evaluation would be made of family trusts, so that the rich were going to pay taxes like everyone else. Yet, this review is now being postponed and you are responsible for that situation.

I remember that, when you formed the opposition, you questioned that for a long time. So, I ask the hon. member: Was the salary freeze in the public service, including the pay increments, an election promise you made after denouncing such a measure when you were in the opposition?

Is this a permanent denial of the right to negotiate, and when will you also make the rich pay?

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I am not at all surprised that the hon. member remembers so well what happened during the last Parliament and especially the salary freeze introduced in this House by the government he, his leader and many several other members of his party were part of. At that time, I would have liked to hear the hon. member say what he just said.

I would like to correct some of the statements the hon. member made. I am sure it was a mistake and that he did not intend to misinform public servants, but he did say that public servants would not get a salary increase even if they accepted a new position. That is not true.

• (1235)

I do not mind if the hon. member takes part in this debate, but I want him to stick to the truth. I want to remind him that it was the government which he, his leader and many members of the Bloc were part of that maintained the tax exemption for family trusts for another generation. It was not a decision made by this government, but we are trying to find a way to right the wrongs for which the previous government is responsible.

Of course, my government and I are not happy about the tough measures we have to take, but these decisions have to be made if we want to give our employees the assurance that they will not lose their job or see their salary decrease. We know this is a tough measure for civil servants to accept, but it is also necessary for their job security.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, today I welcome this opportunity to speak to Bill C-17.

This bill is almost symbolic, because in it the government turns its back systematically on its political commitments, a government that was elected on a promise that it would put Canada back to work and that has now reversed its position. It decided that it is was back to the old routine, that nothing had