

*Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act*

Every member of the House should look at amendment No. 3, go back to his staff and explain why it is that a group of 1,500 to 2,000, mostly women, mostly low-income people, are now being restrained more than the public service and more than Members of Parliament. It is simply because we have a government that no longer has policies. It is simply trying to catch up with the rest of the world, trying to deal with a policy which reflects the fact that it had no policies for the past four or five years. The problem is that they are now hurting people in putting through a program of restraint.

I wish in many ways that I did not have to support this bill, but I know the important thing is a restraint program. I wish in my heart I could say no to that government because it is so inequitable in terms of its application.

One last thing. The New Democratic Party, which stands up for no restraint, does not understand the people who elected them, does not understand the people who live and work hard in this country. It does not understand that all the people who support the program of restraint are ordinary people who know that if we are to have recovery, everybody has to pitch in. Some day the New Democratic Party will understand that, but their ignorance does not justify the government. The government should act more equitably, and I wish they would.

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a few words to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) with regard to this bill in an area where he knows I have had considerable concern from the time the bill was first introduced.

I listened very carefully to what my colleagues, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) have had to say. They made it very plain that within the context of this bill, we accept the need for restraint as being a fundamental principle. We have also urged, over and over again, the need for equity; the need for the restoration of the collective bargaining system within the global figures that the minister has imposed in the restraint program.

● (1520)

I have a special interest in the equity in this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I have expressed it on many occasions both in the House and in committee. That interest is in how the bill will impact on women in the public service and other areas that it affects.

The minister referred to my reaction to what was proposed last evening in one of his amendments. My reaction came in response to a press statement the minister issued earlier in the day in which he said that he was going to restore certain aspects of the collective bargaining system on monetary measures; in other words, that he would allow the public service, "to work out through their own arrangements in respect of new compensation packages, as long as the 6 per cent and 5 per cent limits are respected".

It is true that I welcomed that when I read the press release but I had not realized the intent of the amendment on the Order Paper. I took the words in the press release at face value

and I hoped what was stated in it would mean exactly what it said. I interpreted it to mean that people within the various categories would be able to negotiate their compensation packages, no matter what they were, as long as the over-all figures of 6 and 5 per cent for that category were retained; that within that limit, people at the lower end of the salary scale could perhaps receive a 9 per cent increase if those at the upper end received a 2 per cent increase. I accepted that that was what was meant. I now have severe doubts that it was.

As I said at the time, this was a way in which those at the lower end of the salary scale could still improve their position. As I have pointed out time and time again, in the public service a great number of people at the lower end of the salary scale are women.

Statistics show that 39 per cent of the total number of men in the civil service earn \$23,000 and under, while 79 per cent of the total number of women in the public service earn \$23,000 and under. That is a tremendous difference, Mr. Speaker, and it is the kind of inequity that I hope will continue to be corrected during the time that the bill is in effect.

I see inequity of salaries in the public service as part of an ongoing pattern of this government. Women receive far less pay than men. Women receive far less attention in all the Liberal government's programs than do men. As with other programs, the intention of this bill with regard to women is to put them in a worse position than they were before and to keep them there. The government is forever postponing programs that would improve the lot of women.

One of the major questions before us at the present time is pension reform. The people who would benefit most from pension reform are women. The people who are locked into poverty in their old age are women. For over a year the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) has been promising a green paper on pension reform. She promised it last fall, last winter, last spring, this month—each time it has been postponed—until August, until the autumn. I sometimes wonder if we will ever see the green paper on pension reform. That makes the lot of women worse, Mr. Speaker.

The government's affirmative action programs bear examination, Mr. Speaker. The President of the Treasury Board referred to the improvement in the lot of women in the public service, saying that a great deal is being done through affirmative action programs. Again, the statistics show that five years ago, in 1977, in the upper echelons of the public service, in the senior executive bracket, there were 1,156 men and 38 women; in 1981 there were 1,532 men and 68 women. In those four years, in the upper echelons of the senior executive level, an additional 376 men had moved into that category but only 30 women.

At the lower end of the scale, the support category, the statistics show that of those on the lowest incomes in 1977, 52,833 were men and 58,730 were women; in 1981, 46,328 were men and 59,965 were women. In other words, at the lowest end of the scale there had been an increase in the number of women in the public service; some 1,235 had been