

Government Orders

important to clarify a matter which has arisen in debate, that is, between the hon. member and myself.

Mrs. Catterall: Let him take his turn.

Mr. Crosby: I thought you needed a rest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa West has the floor.

Mrs. Catterall: I must say that I do appreciate that the letters from the President of the Treasury Board are always informative, always accurate and always complete. But, I do not always like what they say.

What the President of the Treasury Board said I found quite disturbing. He said, "Unlike the pay equity legislation in Manitoba and Ontario, there is no requirement for a collective agreement to be re-opened and negotiated wages to be incorporated and pay equity to be incorporated through negotiated wages". The President of Treasury Board also says, "Our legislative provisions do not demand a corrective process when there is a matter of pay equity".

I have said this a number of times in this House and I am going to keep on saying it. I think the government, as the largest employer in the country, on environmental issues and on issues of equity, has an obligation to do not the minimum the law demands but the maximum that justice demands. I have no tolerance for a government that says it is not going to be fair and it is not going to be just because the law does not say it has to.

There have been interjections from the other side of the aisle about the problems being created. I shall conclude, when I conclude, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Angus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I fully appreciate that the standing orders, the rules of this House, allow the official spokesperson for the Official Opposition to have unlimited time. I accept that as one of the rules. However, we are in a closure situation and I just want to point out that clearly what the Liberals are planning on doing is preventing the New Democratic Party from speaking on this important matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the hon. member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme).

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to get into an argument with the hon. member, but I could quote a number of instances in the past when a similar request was made but the roles were reversed, and the member who was speaking at the time refused to oblige. He said: I am sorry, but it's not my fault, I have the floor, and I have a few more things to say. So I am not anxious to hear about all the precedents, but there are precedents. That's just the way it is.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Tough luck, but that's life. She has the floor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa West has the floor.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think by this action, by bringing in this legislation and by its absolutely intransigent bull-headedness and stupidity over the last two years the government has probably done more for collective bargaining in the Public Service and more for worker solidarity than has been done in many decades. It has brought a cohesiveness to these workers that I think they have never felt before. Often it is true of the lowest paid workers in any environment that they find it hard to come together, to work together and to feel good about their association with each other because they are too worried about the necessities of life. But I think the government by its actions has in fact brought these workers together. They are out there in the freezing cold on the picket lines. They are determined to support each other until there is a reasonable and equitable settlement of these contracts.

That is what happens when you try to beat people into submission. I do not know why this government always picks on the lowest paid workers. I do not know why it is always the clerks at the bottom salary scales in government who go out on strike and get left there for month after month. I think it is because the government knows that strike pay is no picnic and you can only survive so long when you earn so little and you have so little saved because everything goes on the necessities of life. So it is easy to pick on these vulnerable workers, the ones who work in the laundries, in the sewing shops and in the kitchens of the hospitals, and the ones who go out to sea