

*Government Orders*

differences that exist between the employees and the Treasury Board.

[*Translation*]

Within Veterans Affairs, Madam Speaker, we have one hospital and two veterans' homes. The hospital is at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue in the west end of the island of Montréal. The homes are the Rideau Veterans Home, here in Ottawa, and Saskatoon Veterans Home.

I shall be concentrating what I have to say, Madam Speaker, on the situation at Ste. Anne's and Senneville. I shall be doing this because it is there that the situation is most grave and this in large part results from the fact that the patients there need much more intense care than in our two homes.

[*English*]

There are more than 726 patients in Ste. Anne's, veterans all, people who served their country well and deserve nothing but the best during the latter days of their lives. Of these 726 patients, about 250 are permanently bed-ridden. Another 400 are able to get by only with the help of a wheelchair and some of them are not capable of operating a wheelchair themselves. We have patients with Alzheimer's disease and many with milder forms of dementia.

To visit Ste. Anne's is to see humanity enduring the travails of old age. Alert minds in wasted bodies and bodies that function while the mind has all but disappeared.

In Ste. Anne's hospital, more than half our staff belong to the hospital services HS group. There are procedures in the event of a strike, as the House will be aware, that allow designations of positions. And since it has been mentioned previously in debate, I do want to add my words to this particular issue. This requires people in such positions to continue to perform their duties if a strike is called in order to provide essential levels of service. In this case, of course, the essential service is to safeguard the health and security of our patients and to maintain their welfare. In Ste. Anne's and our veterans homes, we judged that approximately 90 per cent of our employees in the hospital services group were needed in the event of a strike if we were to run the hospital on normal lines of three shifts a day, seven days a week.

The department did receive an offer to provide essential services at Ste. Anne's from the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Of the 614 employees eligible to strike, the union was prepared to allow 45 to work, 8 per cent of the workers, not the 90 per cent which we judged to be necessary. Even by switching to a two-12 hour shifts a day system, such an offer fell far short of the most minimal requirements.

In addition, in making the offer, the union imposed two conditions which we found too difficult to swallow. One, was that we not contract out any services normally provided by the department. Second, that we not reassign non-striking staff to do the duties of staff who were on strike.

In responding to the offer from the union, the department indicated that while it was most gratifying that the union had been prepared to make an offer at all, the offer of 45 employees or 8 per cent of the staff fell well short of what was needed. Attached to it were conditions, of course, that were absolutely unacceptable to the department and to the hospital management. So the department literally had no option but to reject the offer.

I believe we should now inform the House how the Ste. Anne's has been operated during the strike. I think it is important, first of all, to recognize that the strain on our employees at the hospital did not begin when the strike started, but had begun some considerable time in advance. If you will, Madam Speaker, a war of nerves was in progress before the strike was called. I do not wish to belabour the point or go into any great detail because of my conviction that those who sought to disrupt the hospital's operation were and are a very small minority.

• (1530)

The House may wonder how a hospital with over 800 patients could possibly cope even for a day without the help of orderlies, those who prepare the food and those who keep the institution clean. I would like to tell you a bit about this.

Our doctors, our nurses and our other professional and support staff have been working 12-hour shifts. The nurses, in addition to their own work, have been doing the work normally undertaken by the higher levels of orderlies. The work of other members of the hospital services group has been covered in two different ways: first, by the normal group of volunteers who assist this hospital on a regular basis like many others across Canada. The number of volunteers has been augmented in the community. With the special efforts of members of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Korea Veterans Associ-