

*Private Members' Business*

problem, which is how to determine the amount of the allowance.

The union has argued that it is not easy to judge to what extent one job location warrants a higher salary than another location, because the work is the same. If there is a problem with salaries, determining the allowance will also be a problem.

The hon. member for Dartmouth has remained silent about these issues. I am aware of union demands that everyone should be equal, but when they talk about making everyone equal, they mean raising the lowest salaries to the highest level in a given occupation. So that the hourly rate proposed for a plumber living in a small village of three or four thousand inhabitants where the cost of living is not particularly high is the same as a plumber working on a construction site in Montreal.

• (1145)

Obviously, no plumber is going to turn his nose up at a salary increase in such a region, without its being either remote or isolated. But these have to be taken into account.

Getting back to the remote regions, a person has to pay more to get to work and, then, on top of that he has to pay more for everything he buys in order to live in this remote place, all of which comes out of his salary. A pound of butter in James Bay does not cost the same as in Montreal, because it has to be transported by air.

So, if I pay employees the same salary for their work, the one living in James Bay will not have enough salary to live on there. It does not cost the same to build a house in James Bay or to live there or in Manicouagan as it does in Montreal or Toronto. I am in favour of equalizing by taking the best salary being paid in each place in society, but we do not want to end up with other inequities that would be just as unfair.

We have to be careful in this matter before we legislate, because we also have to allow the business, the employer, to find labour, which at times can be hard to find. I myself was in education. I was an administrator in education. Most teachers from Montreal or from my riding of Joliette, a beautiful riding in the province, asked to go to teach in Port Cartier, a very remote region, would not voluntarily go and work there for equal salary. As the region of Port Cartier would not have been sufficiently self sufficient to develop its own teachers, it would have had to go without competent people to teach there.

The same thing would have happened in James Bay, Manicouagan and in other areas in other provinces. I am thinking of remote areas, in the woods, for example, areas hard to reach. Sometimes competent workers would not be hired, in order to be able to provide everyone with the public services to which they are entitled. This has been discussed with respect to certain trades but health care could have been chosen just as easily as my example of education.

When people are entitled to equal services, their wages must enable them to pay for these equal services to which they are entitled, in all fairness and independent again of their gender, age, skin colour, religion and so on. These are the sorts of things I would like to see addressed by the hon. member for Dartmouth, who seems to have a well intentioned bill here, but one that does not seem to be detailed enough to ensure it would improve the situation instead of creating other areas of inconsistency or other labour relations problems.

I would also like to see these matters discussed between employers and employees, and I think that good personnel administration means that, when disputes of this type crop up, they are discussed together, negotiated, in preference—by far—to letting the courts decide, as has been said.

I am totally in agreement with the unions on this approach when there is a problem, instead of letting grievances develop and going before the courts to have the issue decided, which takes time and runs into thousands of dollars in costs as well. What is preferable is to allow employers and employees to discuss the true nature of the problem and to look together at where solutions lie.

This motion will not be voted upon at this time, but it does show good intentions, and I hope the government will show an interest in it. I hope also, however, that the motion will be able to be translated into a bill which will do more justice to workers, to employers as well, and to the regions. Care must be taken to ensure that the regions do not end up in a situation where they will be unable to have the services necessary for a quality of life and an environment to which they are as entitled as everyone else.

I hope therefore that the hon. member for Dartmouth will seek the assistance of his colleagues in addition to his own opinions on this, and I am anxious to hear their input.

• (1150)

[English]

**Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to support the motion put forward by my colleague from Dartmouth this morning. As we approach the second anniversary of the election that brought us here, I have come to appreciate the many opportunities available to members in terms of how items are put on the agenda and I realize just how talented the member for Dartmouth is in bringing these items to the attention of the nation. I bring to the attention of the House the credit he deserves on not only this one but on other issues.

Before speaking to what I believe to be the merits of the motion I will address some of the concerns that were raised by colleagues who spoke previously.