

*Adjournment Debate*

Rights Commission decision has certainly put that out of balance, and I must say that the decision is retroactive to 1980.

We now have the situation of federal hospitals staffed and supervised by nurses who are in some cases actually getting paid less than the people they are supervising. I am quite sure that the Government would recognize the fact that this is a totally unacceptable and unjust situation. I think it requires immediate action.

The answer that has often been given is that the Government does not want to interrupt the process of collective bargaining. This is not the process of collective bargaining. We are talking about something that is totally out of whack at the moment. It must be corrected quickly.

Nurses are not a militant group. The fact that the nurses are present in the gallery of the House of Commons this afternoon tells us how deeply upset they have become about this whole situation and how they feel that they are being greatly mistreated. What we want is some way of looking at equalizing the pay differential.

● (1820)

In 1977 we had an arbitration decision involving the Wellesley Hospital. I recognize that is an Ontario decision but it established the right to the differential, and that it had in fact existed over the years. That decision is enough of a precedent that I would like the President of the Treasury Board to look at it and establish some kind of mechanism outside of the joint bargaining table in order to achieve equalization.

I cannot think of any other profession which would have tolerated this situation as long as this one has. We are talking about people responsible for the delivery of medication, implementation of doctor's orders, channelling patients into the proper rehabilitation areas, and looking after liaison with the families and friends of patients so that they understand the situation. They are doing all of that and at the same time supervising other people to make sure the work is being done, yet this is not recognized in their pay. Over the last week we have talked a lot about the rights of working people and their need for an equal voice. This situation is upsetting the whole health care delivery system. We know that if the nurses wanted to bring everything to a halt, they could do it. They do not want to do it. They want some justice in the decision-making process.

It took a great deal of thought on their part before they decided to go to work in jeans and T-shirts and so on instead of their professional garb. They have come to the House of Commons tonight to say: "This is what we are as professionals". They are saying that all they want is equal treatment. I urge the President of the Treasury Board to quickly put some kind of mechanism in place to bring this to a quick resolution.

I know the Government has said it will put the entire labour relations system out of wack. It seems to me that for many, many years other professions have managed to do that to get equal treatment. The time has come to look at our nurses and recognize their profession and the fact they are giving us quality care. It is fine to give them compliments but it is much more important to give them a reasonable pay cheque so that they can have a decent standard of living and respect the people they work for as well as the patients they are delivering care to.

I ask if the Government has come up with some kind of mechanism which will bring pay equalization to these nurses who work in institutions under the administration of the federal Government.

**Mr. Pat Binns (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for her interventions on this very important question. On September 29 the Hon. Member raised this question with the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski). He indicated that he not only appreciated her question but that it was a very important matter, one that he was very concerned and sincere about. He said:

Hopefully we can come up with a solution to this problem because, as the Hon. Member recognizes, this would impact right across the country on various other areas as well.

A joint union-management initiative to study the implementation of equal pay for work of equal value service-wide within the federal Public Service was launched in March of 1985. This Government's initiative is not only the first voluntary proactive initiative taken by the employer under the Canadian Human Rights Act, but also the largest proactive equal pay study to be undertaken. I should say as well that the Government and the President of the Treasury Board are pleased that the public service unions are participating jointly in this activity.

● (1825)

The initiative is well under way. Currently 4,419 public service employees are completing questionnaires on the job functions each one of them performs. The data gathered through this process will be evaluated under the job evaluation factors of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions to determine the working conditions and to determine the relative value of each job. The evaluation results will then be analysed in relation to the wages which have been negotiated or set out for each of the occupational groups within the Public Service.

The female-dominated hospital services group comprises a principal focus of the ongoing study. I would like to note that as a result of a complaint under the Canadian Human Rights Act this group recently received a wage adjustment to equalize their wages with the male-dominated general services group. Registered nursing assistants are members of this group and benefited from this wage settlement. The resulting wage