

what I think is an unpleasant reference to the difference in rates of pay between a postal worker in high-pay British Columbia and what he calls the "mailman in low-pay Buctouche, New Brunswick, doing the same job", and who was just about "the highest-paid guy in town". I have just quoted some figures relating to the highest paid guy in town, the town being Buctouche, New Brunswick, and I must say it is somewhat discouraging to hear these most disparaging remarks about those who for one reason or another choose to live in Atlantic Canada. The story in today's paper clearly points out that there is a 10 per cent differential in the rate of pay of that highest paid guy in Buctouche and his brother worker and fellow Canadian in Montreal or Toronto.

A most interesting paper on the subject of national rates of pay for employees of the government of Canada has been prepared by Mr. T. J. Dooling, a service officer of the Department of Public Works component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The paper is dated November 30, 1971. Although I do not have much time left, I should like to make a couple of references to it. On page 2 of the paper Mr. Dooling states:

According to "Interregional Disparities in Income" prepared by S. E. Chernick for the Economic Council of Canada, time has had little or no effect on the actual increase or decrease in disparities. To quote from the conclusion of this study: "Taken as a whole, the analysis emphasizes the significant disparity in per capita income levels from the various regions and sub-regions in Canada. The disparity is somewhat greater in terms of real income comparison. While the degree of income disparity in relative terms has varied with changing levels of economic activity, the longer-run tendency, over a period of roughly 40 years, has been one of little or no change.

On page 6 appears a quotation from the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Roberts):

After a century of growth, almost one quarter of our families in Canada are living at or under the poverty level. Our past programs have treated the symptoms of poverty rather than the disease.

Lastly, a quotation from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield):

Virtually every department in the federal government is involved in the problem of regional disparity.

The point, surely, is that virtually every department is engaged in tackling this problem, but one that is not is obviously Treasury Board which is busily negotiating staff salaries on the basis of institutionalizing by contract the disparity in wages that DREE and other departments of government are trying so hard to end.

It is a little unfair to get away from the main thrust of the hon. lady's motion, which relates to the high cost of food, but I did think it relevant at this stage to mention the continuing disparity not only in the cost of food but in incomes in the Atlantic provinces that are available to buy this food. I often think that we in this country are in danger of what one of my friends has called galloping provincialism, which is a subject perhaps for another debate. In view of the evidence presented by government departments, cabinet ministers and members of the House, I think it is wrong for one department of the government to try to ignore that evidence and build into contract negotiations a continuation of some of the very disparities that so many segments of the government are trying very hard to bring to an end.

### *Increasing Food Prices*

**Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I intervene in the debate only briefly this evening in view of what I think is really a hypocritical position that is taken by the New Democratic Party in the way it has put this motion together. This motion says nothing about other components in the cost of living index, and this in spite of the fact that since 1961, the year upon which the cost of living index is based, in some cases food has gone up by less than two-thirds as much as some other component parts of the cost of living index.

I believe that it is a disservice to Canadian farmers and other food producers to single out food as the major culprit in the increase in the cost of living. This is especially so when we are just coming through a period when for several years the primary producers of food have been having far too low a return for their products.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Nobody has said anything to contradict that.

**Mr. Olson:** The motion alleges that the government has failed to cope with the problem of steadily rising food prices. The hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) who spoke earlier today apparently set out the position of the Conservative party and exonerated everybody in the food processing and distribution chain. So what does it come down to? It must mean that that party believes the increase the primary producers have received during the last few months is the cause of this increase in the cost of living.

**Mr. Fairweather:** You know that is not true.

**Mr. Olson:** The hon. member can read his argument tomorrow. He exonerated the retailer, he exonerated the processors and he exonerated a lot of other people. He said the increase was all because of taxes.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Do not misquote him.

**Mr. Olson:** That was the major thrust of his speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order, please. So far I think we have had a very interesting debate.

**Mr. Fairweather:** The minister is not quoting accurately.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. We have had a very good debate so far and I ask hon. members to allow the minister who has the floor to continue his speech.

• (2030)

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I remind hon. gentlemen opposite that I sat very quietly while their speeches were being made, even though I disagreed with them. It might be interesting to point out that I was sitting in my seat when the hon. member for Brandon-Souris was making his speech. Neither of the hon. members opposite who are complaining now were in their seats, so how do they know what was in that speech? They were not in the House.

Food prices in retail stores have advanced about as much as the general average price increase to consumers for goods and services. Up to March, 1972, the food com-