

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

rapes and murders off the front pages of Canadian newspapers. I am also conscious that my question about the principle of national pay scales in the public service will be more popular in Quebec and the Maritimes than in my own province of British Columbia, whose public servants stand to gain rather than lose by accepting the Treasury Board proposals toward regional rather than national pay rates within the public service.

After putting the question into what I believe to be a proper and rational perspective, may I now get down to the basic question. The basic question is whether or not it is to Canada's and Canadians' long-term benefit to adopt the position taken by Treasury Board in opting for regional pay rates for certain categories of the public service. That is the essential question.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) admitted in the House that this is the bargaining position taken by the government. He said this in reply to my question regarding current negotiations with stationary engineers in Public Works. I quote his reply:

The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is in the affirmative. It has been the policy of successive governments to move from a scheme of national scales of wage rates to ones which are more appropriate and more commensurate with local operating conditions.

When questioned further about the anomalous government position of pushing regional pay scales at the same time as massive spending to reduce regional disparity under DREE, which position seemed contradictory to me, I was ruled out of order as being argumentative. In his initial reply to me the minister implied that the regional pay differential had been the long-term policy of successive governments. When pressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), he was forced to admit it had been the policy of only two successive governments, that is, since 1967.

I have been looking at the testimony of the President of the Treasury Board when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. Before that committee, on March 8, the minister said in reply to a question that the distinction between regional and national pay scales was based on the mobility of the particular component. If the category tended to be highly mobile, then that mobility justified national pay scales. On the other hand, if the category was likely to remain in the community for the bulk of his working life or for a long period of time, regional rates would be more fair to both the public servant and the community in which he served.

This sounds reasonable enough on the surface, but why have regional rates been pushed on the stationary engineers in Public Works when at the same time stationary engineers in federal correctional institutions have been given national rates? That seems to be another anomaly. Surely the job is not very different. Surely stationary

engineers under the Solicitor General (Mr. Goyer) are no more mobile than those who are employed by Public Works. Or is it perhaps that there is recognition of the fact that the correctional component is more militant and that the government could not risk pushing regional rates down the throats of the penitentiary branch.

• (2220)

There is no validity in regional rates. They have been tried in various other classifications including the railroads. They have found very few takers because essentially they are another rip-off. If the government thoroughly believes in regional rates as an established principle, then why not apply them to old age pensions, to Members of Parliament or to the forthcoming revisions in respect of family allowances? There is no more mobility among old age pensioners or people on family allowances than there is in stationery engineers. The government might see how the principle would be accepted in the Maritimes or in Quebec if the policy were extended to that ridiculous conclusion. I say, for heaven's sake stop trying to push this on to the public servants. They do not intend to buy it.

**Mr. Gaston Clermont (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board's position with respect to regional rates of pay is not contradictory to the program of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. As employer, the government is committed to paying rates which are equitable and competitive with rates being paid outside the public service for similar occupations. Where the outside pay data for occupational groups indicate significant variations from the Canadian average, and where the area of recruitment and the mobility of employees within the public service is limited, the government as employer considers it appropriate to pay regional and not national rates of pay. Paying national rates of pay in such circumstances would only serve to overpay employees in some regions and to underpay employees in other regions in relation to the rates of pay prevailing in those regions, neither of which situation from the employer's point of view is desirable or viable.

The basic objective of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is to facilitate economic expansion and social adjustment in areas of Canada requiring special measures, to improve opportunities for productive employment and the access of people to opportunities. The problem of economic disparities is best attacked on a broad economic front. If the effect of regional economic expansion is to raise the rates of compensation in areas that are now low by comparison with other parts of the country, the government as employer will ensure that its rates reflect those changes subject, of course, to collective bargaining provisions in the public service.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.