

*Establishment of New Departments*

most important in the whole area of government at this time. Several problems are critical and others are urgent on a long-range basis. In the critical stage I place the matters of water pollution and power transmission. In the urgent stage I place the matters of water resources and minerals development. The setting up of a department does not of itself accomplish anything. Neither does the shuffling of responsibilities among the ministers, because this is an administrative act. Nothing is accomplished until results are obtained.

I submit that reorganization should be a tool to strengthen and co-ordinate policies in energy and resources.

● (8:10 p.m.)

Some strong policy direction should come from such a department. However, the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys already has his responsibilities assigned under order in council. In effect the passage of this measure will not add anything to the department, except to change its name.

During the past three or four months we have had an opportunity to observe the minister's conduct of the department and the effectiveness which the combination of these various responsibilities has had on the energy and resource field. I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that we have waited in vain for some policy statement in connection with water pollution and water resources. I have read the numerous speeches made by the present minister, all across this country, and he has made many, but I have not managed to read any which refer to the department of which he is the minister.

His speeches have been directed toward English-French relations, constitutional readjustments and everything else except the department for which he is supposed to be responsible. Therefore the burden on my point is that some reorganization of the department will not produce results.

I am sorry the minister is not there tonight. I am not normally critical. I make no apologies, however, because his department is under consideration. The resolution certainly includes a reorganization affecting energy, mines and resources. I believe it is my responsibility to point out that, regardless of the fact that the reorganization of this department has been in effect for several months, nothing has come of it. For example, we tried to get statements of policy on pollution. Many questions were asked, and the minister's reply was: "A statement is coming;

[Mr. Aiken.]

we are working on it; give us time"—and so forth. We were led to believe that eventually we would receive a statement on this very urgent and serious problem of water pollution, particularly as it affects the Great Lakes. Then within the past week the minister, when pressed as to when he was going to make a statement, said he was working on it. He then said, in effect: When you do get it there will not be anything in it; we are only going to explain what we are doing, and in some general sort of way pacify the public and try to prevent them from getting too upset.

It is true that a solution to the problems of water pollution is not quick, and it is not easy. The problem on lake Erie is one which will take years to solve. However, as we all know, there has to be a beginning, there has to be a first step. Not only that, there has to be the appearance of a first step. However, we have had nothing along these lines. I regret that nothing has been done about this critical matter. In spite of the fact that the responsibilities have now been transferred into the minister's hands, what we are discussing will do nothing more than give a name to the department of which he is the minister.

Therefore, while I do support the creation of this department and the idea of energy resources, minerals, atomic energy, water resources, and so forth being placed into one department and under one minister, this action should be a tool to assist the minister in doing the job which he is supposed to be doing; it should be a tool which he can use to co-ordinate the policies in connection with water.

We know and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, who is in the house, knows the terrible mess water problems have got into under the administration of the government. I am not blaming anybody at this moment at all, but we had one facet of water in one department and another facet in another department. This has been spread all over the map. Those of us who have been interested in water levels, water resources and water pollution have had to skip from minister to minister to find out which one has the particular authority in this situation. This is an intolerable situation. I had hoped when I read the original announcement about the combination of these departments, and of water resources under one minister, that here at last we were going to have under one minister the responsibility