

Government Organization Act, 1983

and some days—my frustration was with the federal bureaucracy and with Ministers within the federal Government who did not do as politicians should do, and that is to make sure there was political credit for the federal Government.

I believe political credit is extremely important, not only because of image or glory, but because the citizen, the voter, has the right and the responsibility to know and to find out what his Government is doing for him or her in his or her region. A citizen must make a judgment as to what the federal Government does and as to what the provincial Government does. The question of which Government is responsible for carrying out a program is extremely important in a democracy. The way the whole area of federal-provincial relations is going with regard to regional development is something which should concern many Members. The electorate in regions of slow growth, areas of the country that need to develop their economies, will not tolerate its politicians at different levels of Government bickering and destroying mechanisms of co-operation. It seems to me, in the case of my Province, that in some cases both Governments have been at fault. They have not differentiated between negotiating objectives and seeing where agreements or disagreements are. That is the substantive part. We have not differentiated between that and the politics of the situation.

I hope that when this Bill and this reorganization is complete we will have found ways to improve and to meet the concerns that I know some of the Members in the Liberal caucus have on this Bill.

● (1920)

Generally I think we all support the Bill. I certainly support it because there are some good things in it. There are some things wrong with the system as we know it and some things will be improved. I have made some proposals to the Government as to how to meet these concerns. They are being discussed, and I hope that we can improve the legislation in committee to ensure that we have a better system of meeting the needs of the slow growth regions of the country. We require more co-operative effort at both levels of Government to meet the needs of these regions and to ensure that they can plan their future so that there will be economic development and improvement in the standard of living in these areas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Questions, comments. Debate.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this Bill I hope to be very brief because I know there are other Hon. Members of the House who have comments to make. For example, I am sure the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) would want to talk about DREE and what it failed to do for Simcoe County, particularly the Orillia area. I know he is anxiously preparing notes at the present time to participate in the debate between now and the time the Senate completes its deliberations. I know as well that other Hon. Members are anxious to participate, if given the opportunity.

I want to depart somewhat from the discussions which have taken place to date and concentrate upon other aspects of the Bill. First I want to deal briefly with Part IV which amends the Parliamentary Secretaries Act. There are probably other elements in the Bill which have captured the attention of the public more than this particular section. As Members of Parliament we should be very concerned about the growing lack of responsibility within Parliament for actions taken by the Government. Anyone who has sat in the House of Commons during Question Period knows that there is no greater frustration than trying to ask questions about an area of concern and discovering that the appropriate Minister is not even a Member of the House of Commons, that in fact he is a Senator and is not properly accountable in the House of Commons.

Every one of us accepts that it is both necessary and in some cases desirable to have Members of the Senate represented in Cabinet. It was useful for us when we were in Government and had few Members from Quebec to ensure representation from that portion of the country through using the vehicle of the Senate. The present Government which has only two Members of the House of Commons elected in constituencies west of Ontario has no choice, if it is to have western representation, but to appoint some Members of Cabinet from the Senate.

It leaves us in an invidious position in the House of Commons when important portfolios are given to Senators who are not accountable in the House of Commons. On a day-to-day basis when we attempt to obtain answers from Ministers, we find that the Ministers who have the information are simply not present. That problem will clearly be compounded if the Government gives itself the authority to appoint Parliamentary Secretaries from the Senate. Instead of simply running into problems where Ministers are not available and are not accountable in the House of Commons, Cabinet has devised a formula which will allow Parliamentary Secretaries to be drawn from the Senate as well and will prevent them from doing their job, the job that is necessary, as Parliamentary Secretaries in the House of Commons itself.

Were I a Member of Government, were I a Government backbencher, certainly I would be very concerned about the prospect of parliamentary secretaryships which currently reside in the House of Commons being transferred to the Senate, with the commensurate loss of authority within the House and the commensurate decline in the ability of Government Members of Parliament to have influence in what is happening at Cabinet level.

Nowhere is the lack of responsibility more apparent than it is in the case of the Canada Development Investment Corporation, a Bill which is currently before the House of Commons. The Minister responsible for CDIC is in the Senate, Senator Austin, yet the Minister responsible for the Bill in the House of Commons, the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Busières), is incapable of giving answers. On occasion after occasion when we have asked him questions, we have found that he is simply incapable of giving answers and that decisions are not being made by him but by a Minister who resides in