

*Government Organization*

Another groups of departments could deal with domestic issues, strictly administrative matters, let say, for example, the Post Office, National Health and Welfare, Transport, Labour and Public Works. Perhaps another special department could be added. The department of federal-provincial relations has been mentioned this afternoon. Those relations bring up urgent problems, problems that must be solved every day and it would be advisable to entrust those matters to a special department or minister.

You understand my point, namely that all those departments should be grouped according to homogeneity and entrusted to an assistant of the prime minister who could be called a senior minister.

This would enable the Prime Minister, and even each minister, to enjoy life like everyone else, to take a breather, to go to bed at night and, from time to time, to go and see their family on Saturday or Sunday. This would already be worthwhile. Otherwise, we will tire out our ministers too fast and it could be presumed that if they are allowed to lead a normal life, perhaps they will also have more time to reflect on general policies, on general planning within their department. Perhaps they will have more time to spend in their departments and meet their assistants, even those of the lower echelons, thus improving administration.

• (7:40 p.m.)

The Prime Minister, the senior ministers and all the other ministers may then have more time to receive visitors. We are living in an era of democracy and, Mr. Chairman, I should like to illustrate this particular point.

During the weekend, an event to which I attach a special significance happened in my riding. A convention of the Knights of Columbus of the province of Quebec was held there. They invited the premier to meet them. It is obvious that the premier could not, in the present circumstances, comply with that request.

I understand that the premier delegated one of his ministers to meet them. It so happened that the minister in question was unable to attend the meeting. He expressed his regrets and the Knights of Columbus of the province of Quebec, an organization of prime importance which probably includes the elite from all parts of the province, were sent as a government representative a charming member of parliament who discharged his duty beautifully, lest not my

[Mr. Mongrain.]

remarks seem to reflect on him. His performance was first rate, and I wish to congratulate him on his dignity and eloquence.

But the Knights of Columbus expected to meet a minister. Already disappointed at not having met the premier, they did not see any of his ministers either. They returned home feeling frustrated. They feel that, in a way, a minister belongs to them; not only do they enjoy meeting one, but it also gives them the opportunity of hearing him explain the government policies.

In the present situation, Mr. Speaker, it is known that ministers cannot always accept such invitations. They are overworked. I gave this example, Mr. Speaker—while realizing you were about to call me to order—so as to prove my point. For greater efficiency in government, a framework should be devised to lighten the load on the Prime Minister. Assistants could be given to him to share his responsibilities. Each minister should also be freed to concentrate more fully on his own area.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I read the results of the inquiry ordered by the government at one time into the reorganization of the government for greater efficiency. I was surprised that more insistence was not given to the reorganization of the cabinet.

I repeat what I said a moment ago: I believe that, in the present circumstances, public opinion is convinced that our system of government is obsolete and that we are still running the country according to methods used when people went about on foot, on horseback or in ox-carts, whereas nowadays travelling is by airplane at speeds over 1,000 miles per hour, and telegraph and all sorts of communications are available. Now, I claim that administration methods should be much faster than 100 years ago at the time of confederation or a few centuries ago when parliament as we know it was born in England.

It is absolutely necessary that such basic and fundamental reform, from the cabinet down through the whole administration, and the operations of parliament, be carried out drastically right now.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, and that it may not have been sufficiently emphasized. Public opinion is disappointed that this reform in depth, this radical reform has not yet been carried out.

I believe this is urgent—and I make the recommendation to both parties, the party in