

*Government Organization*

appropriate to rationalize the responsibilities of the two independent offices responsible for matters so crucial to democratic elections in Canada.

Parts VI to IX of the bill contain essentially technical amendments to the constitutive acts of the Medical Research Council, National Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The amendments remove the requirement in each of these acts that all staff appointments carry the specific approval of the minister. The heads of the councils agree that this requirement is an unnecessary involvement of the minister in the day to day administration of the councils.

Part X amends the Parliamentary Secretaries Act to correct the current wording in that act which ties the maximum number of parliamentary secretaries that may hold office to the number of ministers holding office at any given time. This means that if the maximum number of parliamentary secretaries are holding office when a minister resigns, one of those parliamentary secretaries must resign, potentially creating a situation where the House would lose access not only to a minister but also to his parliamentary secretary at the same time. The amendment would provide that the maximum number of parliamentary secretaries is set at the time of appointment and so would not be affected by a subsequent resignation of a minister. This involves no increase in the maximum number of parliamentary secretaries that may be appointed.

Finally, Part XI of the bill contains a number of technical and general amendments consequential on the division of the Department of Fisheries and the Environment.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, these are the basic principles and intent underlying each of the parts of this bill. The measures contained in this legislation carry the support of Canadians in the areas affected. These measures sharpen the tools we have to provide better government for all Canadians. While I welcome and will give careful consideration to any improvements in the present bill that hon. members may wish to propose, I would hope that members on both sides would agree that the bill should proceed without delay. It is in this spirit that I have outlined the substance of the bill for the House with a minimum of argumentation. I hope that all hon. members will join in this spirit as the debate proceeds.

**Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to follow the government House leader, particularly after having heard his last statement that it is his wish, desire and hope that this bill proceed with dispatch. Let me point out that he has conveniently forgotten that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made a promise back in 1974 about the need to separate fisheries in the department and create a full, complete and worth-while department of fisheries. Therefore, what the government House leader has done at this time is to touch a very sore point with members on this side of the House, not only in our party but in all opposition parties.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

I was very pleased to note that there is a new thrust by the government in terms of fisheries and environment and that the government intends to proceed in a spirit of consultation and co-operation rather than confrontation which seems to have been the path of pursuit for which this government is so famous.

I join the government House leader in congratulating Mr. Nelson Castonguay for the job he has done in the past. I am pleased to say that every commendation should go his way for his sincerity and the assistance he has given to members from all sides of the House, as well as for his dedication to duty.

Regarding what Mr. Speaker has indicated, namely that this bill after second reading should be sent to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, may I say that that seems fair, but I have a better suggestion to make to the minister in light of the fact that this bill deals primarily with fisheries and the environment. Therefore, I think it would be more in keeping with that thrust, and after such an unwarranted and undue delay, that the government House leader ensure that the bill is directed to the proper place. It is my view that all the other points which the minister made in his introductory remarks regarding the 11 parts of the bill are not that significant in terms of urgency. Therefore, I hope that those of us who come from the Atlantic provinces and from the west coast and who, over the years, have been hammering home the fact that the government has shown several shortcomings with regard to its fisheries policy—no derogatory connotation is to be attached to the present minister—will receive an explanation and elaboration.

**An hon. Member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Alexander:** I know that the Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) (Mrs. Campagnolo), who should be directing her attention to Loto Canada, wishes to intervene. I hope the minister takes that advice and direction, which she seldom ever takes. I notice the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) is nodding his head in the affirmative, from which I conclude that the government House leader has received the necessary direction from the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment that when this bill receives second reading it be sent to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

● (1530)

We are back after the Christmas break, and I think we are all rested. I sincerely wish everyone the best of health. I have not had that myself. Perhaps many hon. members missed me.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Alexander:** But I was absent for a reason. Now I am back waiting to shake hands with my colleagues.

I would like to wish hon. members opposite success in the forthcoming election, but I cannot go that far because many Canadians, and I, wonder what devious schemes the Prime Minister is planning in order to become the darling of Canadians once again. In my view, that is an impossible task. Hon.