

Government Organization

volume of legislation and other business which has been coming before us in recent years.

During the debate on the house rules the opposition argued that in a democratic government the criterion of efficiency should be applied to the administration rather than to the legislature.

While many of us do not accept the part of that argument which applies to the legislature, we can all agree that efficiency is a desirable goal for an administration. The new rules will enable this house to add a large number of laws to the statute books at each session, and we must assure ourselves that the public service is organized to administer those laws as effectively and economically as possible. That is the purpose of the many changes proposed by the present bill. Each of them has been planned in response to a clearly defined need.

In one case an area of relatively new and rapidly expanding activity has called for the creation of a new department. We can foresee that the whole field of communications will be of growing importance to Canada and will require increasing federal government involvement.

For example, the impact of man-made satellites on our everyday lives is going to be revolutionary, and we can only guess at the implications of the new techniques of information storage and transmission. Canada is playing a leading role in the development and manufacture of these new instruments of communication. In our second century they may well prove as essential to the unity of our country as our transportation systems have been since confederation.

The government must be prepared to deal with complex questions of public administration and policy in this wide ranging field. Under the terms of this bill, this responsibility will be assigned to a single minister heading the department of communications.

[Translation]

The reorganization proposed in this bill will in some cases enable the government to face more effectively problems which are not new but could not be solved adequately within the present structures.

We know—and this was often said at the recent constitutional conference—that regional disparities have existed since the very first days of Confederation. We also know that the federal government has attempted, especially

[Mr. Trudeau.]

for a few years now, to reduce such disparities by having recourse to equalization payments, cost sharing programs and an increasing number of regional development projects. Most of those regional development programs were the responsibility of five ministers, I should say of several departments and various agencies.

Mr. Speaker, after all such programs have been consolidated under the sole Department of Regional Economic Expansion, we shall be clearly in a better position to achieve real coordination and centralization of our endeavours and undertakings in such a worthy and vital sphere in respect of our country's future. At the same time, we can group the many experts who, up to now, were trying to implement the regional development programs inside various departments.

However, we shall not content ourselves with merely following up what has been under way until now. The new department at the present time is in the process of revising the traditional notion of regional development.

The new policies will benefit from past experience, but they will also take into account today's new economic conditions. Later on, during discussions, the minister will have the opportunity to state in detail how he intends to consider the whole matter. But, on the other hand, he will be sufficiently empowered by the provisions of the act to implement the new policies of regional expansion.

[English]

Another example of an activity which will be continued within a new structural framework is the work of the Medical Research Council. In the last eight years the federal government's contribution to medical research has increased tenfold from \$2.3 million to \$26.9 million. The Medical Research Council, which administers these funds, was originally set up as part of the National Research Council. To better provide co-ordination of the federal government's activities in the field of health, while at the same time maintaining the degree of independence presently enjoyed by the Medical Research Council, the bill establishes the council as a separate corporation, responsible to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

● (3:00 p.m.)

The bill also establishes the Science Council of Canada as a separate corporation. Under the existing Science Council of Canada Act,