

Government Organization Act, 1983

and it is an irresponsible act about which all Members of the House should feel very, very concerned.

We on this side of the House believe in economy whether it be of a huge sum of money or of a smaller sum of money, and we advocate that this amendment is a very small step but a significant step in that direction. We also believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have a responsibility to our constituents to try to achieve smaller rather than bigger Government. During the course of the recent byelection in Brandon-Souris, I knocked on many doors and stood on many doorsteps. Many people expressed the opinion to me that Government had grown to such an extent that it was largely out of control. I would therefore oppose the addition of four Parliamentary Secretaries for that reason, Mr. Speaker, if for no other reason.

It seems to me that this measure to provide for the addition of Parliamentary Secretaries and the eligibility of Senators, if it is passed, denies the concept of responsible Government as I understand it. As I see the function of the other place at this point in time, prior to the reform which we hope will occur, it is really an institution of a sober second voice which may perform a very useful function in terms of operating at committee stage and the like but does not really play a role in responsible Government as most of us understand that principle.

Responsible Government as we understand it means that members of the executive should essentially and primarily be Members of this House and they should be accountable to Members of this House. It is very important, therefore, that the principal players in the Government be selected from the House. I can see no reason why we should make Members of the other House eligible for appointments of this kind as Parliamentary Secretaries. In fact, according to my studies, it would be a negation of the principles of responsible Government.

I would urge Members of the House, including Members opposite, to accept this amendment. Surely there must be some Members opposite who feel a bit uncomfortable about a proposal which suggests that somehow there are too few Members of the House of Commons to fill the positions of Parliamentary Secretaries. They must also feel uncomfortable with the expenditure of unnecessary funds in a time of high unemployment and a time of high deficit. I would urge them, therefore, to take this opportunity to negate a small but very important part of this Bill by accepting the amendment which is before the House which would negate the principle of an increased number of Parliamentary Secretaries and negate the idea that Senators should be eligible for appointment to such positions.

● (1630)

We do not need more Parliamentary Secretaries at this time. We do not need an additional expenditure of \$40,000 of a frivolous nature. Very decisively, we do not need Senators to be appointed to these positions. Those who were appointed to the Senate were appointed perhaps for dubious reasons but for a well established purpose. I suggest that they carry on with

their task, and I think that we in this House should carry on with our task. We do not need this proposal, and I urge Members of the House to support the amendment and negate the Government proposal.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I join the debate in support of the amendments that are now before us regarding Parliamentary Secretaries. I do not know whether the Members opposite have recently looked at the Wednesday edition of *Hansard* where the list of the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries appears. If they were to do so, there is no doubt a good number of them would be very pleased to see their names figuring there.

In order to set this debate in some sort of context, I would like to begin my remarks by drawing the attention of the House to the fact that, as those of us in the House know and perhaps some who are watching these proceedings may not know, every Wednesday *Hansard* lists at the back the names and attachments of the Ministry and the Parliamentary Secretaries. There are 35 members of the Ministry in the latest Wednesday edition of *Hansard* on October 19. There will be another list issued tomorrow, and perhaps there may even be 36 Ministers listed. There are 27 Parliamentary Secretaries. We are now being asked in this legislation before us, if it passes without the amendment, to create the power to designate additional Parliamentary Secretaries, which would make approximately 31 or 32. There is almost a race between the Ministry and the Parliamentary Secretaries. While the Ministry is keeping just ahead of the Parliamentary Secretaries, if we are not careful, the Parliamentary Secretaries might very well overtake the Ministers. However, I hope that at least some of the machinery being used in the Privy Council office will enable those who designate Parliamentary Secretaries to realize that any Minister should not have more than one Parliamentary Secretary.

I noticed that no one from the opposite side rises to enter into this debate. I suspect it is probably because they would like to feel that they might be included in one list or the other. Perhaps it is a stage in the direction toward a minister to become a Parliamentary Secretary and learn the procedures in the Department. To the best of my knowledge, Members of the Government have every facility to do that without being Parliamentary Secretaries. Whenever a Parliamentary Secretary rises in his place to answer a question in the absence of a Minister, the answer is almost invariably, "I will take notice of that question and get back to the Member." That is what Parliamentary Secretaries do, as far as this House is concerned. I think we might as well have a little button on the desk where the Minister sits and, if he is away, his seat mate could just press the button and the tape recorder would say, "In the absence of the Minister I will take notice of this question and report back to the Member." That would serve an equally good purpose because we do not get the answer to the question when the Minister is not there.

In fact, I wonder whether Parliamentary Secretaries should even be entitled to reply to questions on the floor of the House. Presumably they have some duties back in their Departments.