

*Government Organization*

of the new department are described in the bill itself and in necessarily juridical prose. These, I believe, can best be studied at the clause by clause stage of the bill. Instead I intend to address myself to more basic questions: What the department is, what it is doing and, above all, what it hopes and intends to be doing.

First, what is the department? The simplest explanation is usually the most descriptive: It is a department of communications. Communications, to resort to a dictionary definition, means "to transmit information". The word is derived from the Latin, *communicare*, meaning to transmit, or to participate. These two root meanings of communications, the one a passive act the other an active one, are both integral to the purpose and functions of the department as I shall explain later in my speech. The origin of the department dates back to July 12, 1968, and a statement by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) which I quote:

The growing importance of communications and the government's increasing involvement necessitates that one department and minister be made responsible for all government activities in this field. Consequently, a new department will be formed, to which will be transferred the functions of the Post Office Department.

## [Translation]

This legislation executes the Prime Minister's statement of intent, with one change in structure which I will explain in a moment. Combined and rationalized under a single minister are all of the government's activities in the field of communications, that is both communications in its modern, electronic sense, and communications in its traditional sense of the Post Office. Our responsibility will be with the medium, not with the message, but, as I shall describe at the end of my speech, these two functions are inter-related and inter-dependent, and we intend to be fully aware of the inter-action between the two.

As the Prime Minister stated, the object of this legislation is to make a single minister responsible for all government activities in the field of communications. As honourable members will see from the departmental chart which has been distributed to them, the Minister of Communications is responsible for two departments, each headed by a deputy minister, and also for a number of government agencies. The departments are, of course, the Department of Communications itself and the Post Office. The agencies which will now report to parliament through the

Minister of Communications are the C.O.T.C., the Canadian Overseas Telecommunications Corporation; the Canadian Transport Commission, but specifically only that segment of the C.T.C. concerned with the regulation of telecommunication rates, and, once it is established by legislation, the domestic satellite corporation. To ensure that all these institutions operate in the closest co-operation and consultation, there will be created a policy review committee, coordinated by the Deputy Minister of Communications, and comprised of the senior officials of the two departments and of the crown corporations.

Before dealing with the Department of Communications, which is totally new, I would like to deal with a department which is old, and familiar to all—namely the Post Office. This legislation directly affects the Post Office only to the extent that the responsible minister will now carry the title of Minister of Communications.

There is here, perhaps, a small element of confusion. The Minister of Communications will be at one and the same time the Postmaster General. The title Postmaster General will remain on the statute books and for administrative reasons will continue to be used to an extent within the department itself. It will, however, disappear from public usage, much in the same way that the Minister of Finance is also, but is rarely so referred to as, the Receiver-General.

## [English]

Postmaster General is an old and honourable title, one of the very few portfolios unchanged in name through the 100 years of political history since confederation. I am the 47th minister to occupy the portfolio. The most renowned Canadian to hold the title was the first, Sir John A. Macdonald, although I must add that he held it for only 24 hours.

**An hon. Member:** He quit while he was ahead.

**Mr. Kierans:** The Post Office, as hon. members know, is today undergoing rapid and radical changes. It has to if it is, almost literally, to survive. Lawrence O'Brien, the former postmaster general of the United States, has described the post office in his country as in "a race with catastrophe". These changes may take many forms but their end objective is a post office restructured as a modern, efficient system of communications able to serve the public by finding its proper place in this age of electronic, total and instant communication.