

Supply—Justice

minister has been obliged to expend his energies in endeavouring to discharge his primary duty as the principal law officer of the crown, while maintaining control of a number of associated agencies, each of vital importance in its own sphere of operation. I submit that the concentration of responsibility for law enforcement and correctional services in the proposed new department of the Solicitor General is both a logical and a practical development.

At the same time, the nation must have assurance that adequate recognition has been given to the urgent problem of organized crime, the increasing incidence of juvenile delinquency and the need for more intensive and specialized studies in the related fields of correctional services and penal reform. The assignment of these tasks to the Solicitor General, and the erection of a new department to administer these responsibilities, represents a practical and necessary step in this direction. I want to make it clear, beyond any possibility of doubt, that the Minister of Justice must and will remain solely responsible for determining whether, as the result of any investigation made by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or other agency charged with regulatory or investigative responsibilities under the law, there is a case for prosecution and, in the event of a positive determination to that effect, for initiating the prosecution in all instances where this action lies within federal jurisdiction. To this extent the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada will retain his traditional responsibility to ensure that the law is properly enforced. In fact, his position may be strengthened, to the benefit of the country, in that he will be able to devote his full attention to the important task of evaluating information supplied by the investigative agencies and deciding on appropriate courses of action.

Furthermore, the Minister of Justice will be freer to concentrate his efforts in trying to solve the increasingly difficult problem of drafting clearly and accurately the new and more complex legislation required by the economic, social and political evolution of a new and exciting century for Canada.

In this respect, it is my hope to be able to establish soon a separate division of the department to deal generally with legal research and law reform. I also propose for the sake of accuracy and clarity to take whatever steps are necessary to draft legislation in each of the two official languages in order to

avoid the difficulty of interpreting translated law.

In order to remove from our statutes obsolete, inadequate and outdated laws and regulations as well as to keep up with the day to day activities of the department, not only was it necessary to reorganize the department as has been done, but the minister must be given parliamentary time to bring the required amendments before the house for enactment, and I sincerely hope that with the application of the new rules of the house this will be possible.

These briefly are some of the reasons behind the changed responsibilities in the Department of Justice. I want to assure hon. members that the decisions which have been taken are the result of an earnest desire on the part of the government to achieve purposes which, I am sure, will commend themselves to members of this house.

Mr. Woolliams: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, whether I might ask the minister a question, to clarify his opening remarks, and whether I might do so before the Prime Minister makes a statement. I take it that the estimates we are now discussing were the estimates based on the department as it existed before any suggested change. I take it that we shall be discussing the department as it existed prior to any suggested change made by the minister?

Mr. Cardin: No, Mr. Chairman. The different matters coming under the estimates will be discussed by the minister who has the responsibility now. For instance, matters under penitentiaries and correctional institutions will be discussed by the Solicitor General. Those having to do with combine investigations will be discussed by the President of the Privy Council. The rest of the estimates coming under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice I shall discuss.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, I know that it is not usual for the Prime Minister to follow immediately after the minister in opening the discussion of the estimates of his department, but the circumstances of the situation are themselves not usual, and they arise out of a question which was addressed to the Minister of Justice toward the end of January, which he answered on January 31. The question was whether there should be a special inquiry, and whether the government would not institute a special inquiry into the circumstances of the dismissal of one Victor Spencer from the public service. The Minister of Justice