

*Establishment of New Departments*

interest only to the particular ministers involved in a particular phase of government.

The second proposal I want to put forward based, again, on experience is one doubly needed by the present government. It is clear to me that what is killing the efficiency of government in Canada as well as in the United States and, I believe, in Great Britain and France, is the fact that with this division into departments and the fact that no minister or deputy minister has the time or the strength to learn all about his department, we have this departmentalized effect going on and there is a tremendous loss of efficiency due to the fact that there is no co-ordination between the departments or between groups of departments.

My second suggestion is similar to what I was talking about last Thursday on the bill to amend the Research Council Act, namely that someone has to be in the Privy Council who can report back to this house. At the present time under our rules the Prime Minister is the person who speaks in the House of Commons for all matters looked after by the Privy Council. The Privy Council tends to collect in its orbit matters which cover several departments. That is why scientific affairs, for example, are dealt with in the Privy Council, as they have been for many years.

We understand from the Prime Minister this afternoon that Treasury Board is coming under the Privy Council. Common sense tells us that the Prime Minister is too busy with the tremendous load of other government policy and the social pressures placed on him to attend to all this work in detail and the house does not wish to bother him with questions which ought to be asked.

We have seen many fine things done in the various departments, things which are supposed to be brought to life and pushed by the Privy Council, but they have become dormant because there is no one there to watch over these enterprises. I suggest that someone other than the Prime Minister should be responsible to the house for all the affairs of the Privy Council about which hon. members have a right to know, and upon which action should be taken.

I do not care who this person is. Under our system we can give to the parliamentary secretaries more power than they now have. We can say to the two parliamentary secretaries to the Prime Minister: We hold you responsible for the action or lack of action on these various administrative things that are going on in the Privy Council.

This would mean no loss of prestige to the Prime Minister because the whole house accepts the fact that you cannot ask the Prime Minister to look into all the details of Treasury Board transactions. That is a full-time job for any one man, and even then he would have only a partial grasp of it.

If we had someone here we know we could approach when certain things happened or did not happen in Treasury Board, if we knew we could ask questions and this person would be empowered by the government to answer, it would be an improvement. If the government or the Prime Minister do not like the idea of giving this extra power or normal power to the parliamentary secretaries, maybe they would appoint a deputy leader who would have the responsibility of handling the administration. If you like, he would be a junior minister to the Prime Minister. And if that seems a threatening proposal to a leader—if it is felt you are building up a rival—maybe you could empower a junior minister to answer for the affairs of the Privy Council. A position of this kind would be tremendously important, not necessarily in the field of policy. I think this minister would be the one to call the ministers concerned together every two weeks and ask them: What have you done about this cabinet decision; what is ahead that you should be doing? There is need for a correlation and co-ordination of this group of individual ministers.

● (8:50 p.m.)

This would mean no loss of prestige to ministers. I believe most of them would be glad to know what was happening in other departments, but in many cases ministers have to read in the press what is happening. Certainly I know that many of the members of the present cabinet must be convinced that this statement is true, because the variety of statements we get in the press from various members of the cabinet indicates that there has not been any correlation, and indicates that no one has co-ordinated their proposals. They are all riding off in different directions, each in his own right absolutely sound; but when we ask the Prime Minister if what they say is government policy, we all know the type of answer we get. I would suggest it is in the interest of all parties if we could have one minister or parliamentary secretary as a co-ordinator. Which one is immaterial to me, but there has to be co-ordination and correlation of the work.