

Government Organization Act, 1970

itself. I am in good company; some members on the other side of the House have in recent weeks seen fit to support our views in this regard. The problem lies with the rigid approach of the Prime Minister to the question of securing parliamentary approval of the legislation that is required in operating the affairs of this country.

I hope these remarks will be considered by the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues. Let me say the government has a sorry record in its dealing with this House and Parliament and in its attempts to secure the approval that it should have, after adequate debate and discussion, of measures because they have not been exposed in ample time to enable everyone to be well informed about them. This has not been the case ever since this Parliament met, and it certainly has not been the case during the course of this last session.

I now take my seat, having uttered those words in the spirit of utmost kindness and I hope they will be taken into account and heeded by the government. If there are some hon. members on the government side who are anxious to spring to the defence of the government as a model of administrative efficiency, then let them do so. If they do not, we must take it that they have some of the same doubts that I have.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Clause 13 agreed to.

The Chairman: I might ask the committee for advice at this point. We have completed Part IV. We could now go to Part V or revert to section 2, to which an amendment is outstanding. Is it the consensus of the committee that we deal with Part V?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

On clause 25—*Maximum numbers.*

The Chairman: Shall clause 25 carry?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Chairman, you really did not think that clause 25 was going to carry as easily as all that, did you?

Mr. McCleave: Why not? Hope springs eternal around here.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The present arrangement is that the number of parliamentary secretaries in existence at any one time shall not exceed 16, which I think is pretty generous. I do not see why we should extend this number to a number that is even beyond what we think it might be. If clause 25 passes we may well be authorizing 28 or even 30 parliamentary secretaries. I suppose there will be that many votes for the clause on the other side of the committee, but nevertheless we think that the legislation should stay the way it is. Therefore, when debate on clause 25 has concluded we should like a vote on the clause so that all those who want to maintain efficiency in government and to keep down expense will be able to vote against the clause.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has said succinctly what I would have said in much more extended terms. There is, of course, a place for parliamentary secretaries, and I see the hopeful looks and gleams in the eyes of hon. members sitting opposite. I would judge that the discipline of the Whip was not needed this afternoon in view of the number of hon. members sitting opposite hopefully awaiting an accolade. I see hon. members there who might well grace the offices of parliamentary secretary. I only repeat what I have said before. There now can be by the Act 28 parliamentary secretaries.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If this passes there might be 28 or 30.

Mr. Baldwin: There might be 28 or 30, but there are 28 now. There are 28 existing ornaments of the Privy Council, with two more appointments possible, plus an unknown number of ministers of state who will be operating in assisting capacities. I must say that I shudder for the future of this country.

Mr. MacEachen: This is an "exparticipatory" democracy.

Mr. Baldwin: I simply want to file a caveat so that at the commencement of the next session when I get up and say I told you so, and there will be opportunity to do that with the action or the lack of it on the part of this government, I will have at least laid my cards on the table. Under the circumstances, I think we have no alternative but to vote against this particular measure.

Mr. Bell: Mr. Chairman, the remarks of the hon. member for Peace River lead me to ask whether the government will give an assurance that we can expect a little more from these parliamentary secretaries than we have been getting. I have been in opposition for quite a while, and I am tired of this silly and subservient attitude of some of these parliamentary secretaries. They should be given more responsibility in order to force them into action, or they should be told that if they are to continue in their jobs Parliament expects more from them.

I speak with a great deal of authority on this matter of parliamentary secretaries. I was appointed a parliamentary secretary in 1958 when a certain other government took over, and in 1962 I was still a parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Baldwin: And a good one, too.

Mr. Bell: I know it is very hard to get a promotion as a parliamentary secretary, and unless we do a little more for these positions we will all suffer here in Parliament. As everybody knows, we are having difficulty manning committees. I do not see why some of these parliamentary secretaries could not be induced to take the 18 minute walk to the West Block to attend some of these