

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

[English]

**Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Bigg) on several occasions during his speech apologized to this House for being somewhat negative. I intend to be somewhat negative, but I will not apologize. I think it is the duty of a Member of Parliament on some occasions to be negative. I consider this bill to be an outrage. It is undoubtedly one of the most misbegotten, if not the most misbegotten, pieces of legislation ever to appear before this House. Obviously, it is the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) bill. That would be obvious even if his name did not appear on the front page, because it demonstrates a total lack of understanding and an utter contempt for this institution.

Lest some think that I am about to launch into an "Oh, dear, things aren't what they used to be at the old school" speech about the hallowed traditions of parliament, let me disabuse them. I object to Parliament being treated with contempt. I object to its importance, its prestige and its role being downgraded; because only a healthy, vital and vigorous House of Commons can hope to exercise proper control over the immensely powerful men on the cabinet benches who direct and administer this country and, in so doing, exercise the vast and ever-increasing powers of its government. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, only a healthy, influential and aware House of Commons is capable of injecting into a governmental system increasingly dominated by the bureaucracy the kind of responsiveness to the felt needs of the people that is necessary if complete alienation of the people from their government and the consequent anarchy, violence and repression are to be avoided.

As is so often the case with things the Prime Minister does, this bill is too clever by half. It demonstrates the danger in someone's adopting the advice of Machiavelli without understanding that Machiavelli was proffering his opinions to another sort of prince, one who governed in a land without law and without well founded institutions of government.

We are being asked, in considering this bill, to pass judgment on no less than nine different subject matters and at least five, perhaps more, matters of principle with a single vote. In summarizing them, I think I can do no better than to quote from the remarks made by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) as reported on page 2760 of *Hansard*:

• (4:40 p.m.)

—there are these separate provisions in Bill C-207. The first part, clauses 2 to 7, creates a Department of the Environment. The second part, clauses 8 to 11, amends two acts: the Government Organization Act of 1966, and the Resources and Technical Surveys Act. The third part, clause 12, amends the National Research Council Act. The fourth part, clauses 13 to 24, creates ministries and ministers of state. The fifth part of the bill, clause 25, amends the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, otherwise known as "answering the prayers of the hungry". The sixth part, clause 26, amends the Post Office Act. The seventh part, clause 27, amends the Public Service Superannuation Act. The eighth part, clause 28, amends the Salaries Act. Finally, part nine, clauses 29 to 34, contains general and transitional provisions, and these may be apportioned variously among the other parts.

[Mr. Corbin.]

He went on to say:

To recapitulate in a slightly different way, we are being asked to create a new department; we are being asked to vary administrative duties of some existing departments; we are being asked to create ministers of the Crown who will formulate and develop government policy and, as well as providing for these salaried ministers, we are being asked to provide for additional salaried Parliamentary Secretaries. Distinct from those matters, we are also asked to vote yea or nay, without hearing witnesses, on behalf of those affected on the question of the retirement rights and obligations of public servants.

In attempting to justify the inclusion of such wildly differing subjects within a single bill, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. McEachen) offered us this gem, and I quote from page 2762 of *Hansard*:

"—the overall theme or overall principle of the bill is the improved organization of the government and that of each of these so-called propositions is directed to that policy objective—"

One can immediately recognize that argument for what it is, sophistry, and mediocre sophistry to boot. The Prime Minister in preparing this legislation, knowing himself to be extremely clever and, speaking ex cathedra, having declared the rest of us to be nobodies, decided to pack so much material into this bill that there would not be an opposition member or a government backbencher who could not find within it an opportunity to ride his own particular hobby horse. Thus, he anticipated each of us would enthusiastically ride off in a different direction, leaving him free to do as he pleased.

Moreover, by including a motherhood provision in the form of a department of the environment, he felt he had ensured a favourable vote for the bill. This is the same practice so often employed by American congressional committees, a legislative technique universally deplored. Well, I am not going to play his silly little game. Apart from everything else, this bill is aggravating because it graphically illustrates the ignorance, incompetence and inefficiency of the government. By placing each of these several measures in a single bill, they have virtually guaranteed that more time will be taken to enact them into law than if each had to be introduced separately, as should have been the case. I say this because it is a lead-pipe cinch that most members who speak on the bill will give vent to their entirely justified anger at the form of the bill, as well as debating the substance of the various subject matters. It would be hard to discover in the history of this country another government which has so effectively and consistently botched the presentation and execution of ideas, even good ideas, as has this government.

As annoying as it might be to be subjected in this fashion to the inefficiencies which result from having to follow the whims of a rank amateur in terms of the managing of this House—I am not speaking of the President of the Privy Council—it is downright enraging to hear the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) argue that the provisions of the bill will strengthen our democracy when the bill itself, and many of the omnibus bills which have preceded it as well as those which will undoubtedly succeed it, tend to weaken our central democratic institution, Parliament. Whether this is an acceptable form of legislation is one of the matters of