

Mr. Skoreyko: Mr. Speaker, I have the same point of order. I, too, entirely concur with the views expressed by members of the House and, indeed, with your ruling. I think it is important at this juncture to point out, if I may, that according to the precedents cited, at no time has an omnibus bill been presented to the House giving carte blanche to the government to appoint ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and the like. That is an important point which I think should be taken into consideration in the future.

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that at this point we are resuming the debate we were having a moment ago. Perhaps hon. members might have expressed these views while we were considering the point of order, so that additional arguments might have been advanced for the consideration of the government and the guidance of the Chair. However, the motion has now been put and the Chair recognizes the President of the Treasury Board.

• (4:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, in moving second reading of the bill sponsored by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), I should like to make it clear that I do not intend to go into detail regarding each clause of this bill, because this can be done after the motion for second reading has been passed. Hon. members may wish to raise questions of a general nature relating to the bill; I shall try to answer them. It is my intention to deal with the principle on which the provisions of this bill are based.

In essence, the government organization bill deals with the constant challenge facing Parliament and the government to be as efficient as possible in doing those things which are in the interest of the Canadian people and society. This challenge is imposed upon us by the rapid changes taking place today, and our response in this regard must be positive. Both Parliament and the government must be flexible; both must adapt their procedures and structures; and in the final analysis, the test is whether they are continuing to respond effectively to the needs of the society and of the world with which they must deal.

The government is determined to meet the challenge of change by continually enhancing its capacity to deal effectively with all those matters that are vital to the welfare of Canadians. If enacted, the bill before us, will better equip the government to develop and implement new policies to serve Canadians in a variety of fields: amongst them, the fight against pollution. At the same time it will provide for greater accountability of the executive to Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I should now like to turn to Part I of the government organization bill, the Department of the Environment Act.

I believe that very few Canadians need to be convinced that the challenge posed by a deteriorating environment, which faces all people and particularly those living in

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industrialized nations such as Canada, is one that raises the very issue of human survival itself.

This fundamental issue was clearly recognized by hon. members through their initiative some months ago, to call for the establishment of a Special Committee on Environmental Pollution, which has been ably chaired by the member from Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Anderson). I have no doubt that if Parliament approves the proposal to establish a Department of the Environment, the new minister and his officials will follow with keen interest the proceedings of this Special Committee.

A principal objective of the proposed minister of the environment and of his department would be to ensure that Canadians, both now and in the future, would be able to enjoy a natural environment of high quality. It would be their task to see that acceptable levels of environmental quality are set and where they have been transgressed, that efforts are made to restore these levels and to prevent undesirable changes in the future.

These statements are easy to make, Mr. Speaker, but in a society where many have only recently become aware of and concerned about the problems of environmental quality, a new understanding of and new perspectives on these problems must be developed so that we can come to a general agreement on the sort of balance that should be struck between the quality of our natural environment and the pursuit of those activities which often result in pollution of the environment. The new minister must help Canadians understand the causes and effects of environmental change and their implications, so that the activities of our community can be directed to achieve desirable levels of environmental quality.

Part I of the Government Organization Bill outlines the powers, duties and functions of the Minister of the Environment and lists the statutes for which he is to be responsible. In addition to the minister's general responsibility for renewable resources and for environmental quality, his responsibilities will include those recently transferred to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry by order in council pursuant to the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act. While as a general rule it is important to separate within the administration of public affairs, the exploitation interest from the conservation interest, this rule should not apply in a strict sense—it is important to make a distinction particularly where the resources in question are renewable. Fish, wildlife, crops and trees must have a clean environment if they are to flourish, and they often provide our first indicators of environmental deterioration. Those who are involved in the field of renewable resources have a keen understanding of the importance of conservation and high levels of environmental quality.

In fisheries and forestry for example, there is a keen awareness of the importance of conservation and of the maintenance of environmental quality to continuing commercial success. Therefore, the addition of new emphasis on conservation will not detract from but augment the traditional role of the federal government in relation to those who are engaged in the fisheries business and forestry business. Accordingly, I am confident that the