

*Government Organization Act, 1970***GOVERNMENT ORDERS****GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION ACT, 1970****PROVISIONS RESPECTING DEPARTMENTAL REORGANIZATION, MINISTRIES OF STATE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES, ETC.**

The House resumed from Tuesday, February 9, consideration in committee of Bill C-207, respecting the organization of the government of and matters related or incidental thereto—Mr. Trudeau—Mr. Honey in the chair.

The Chairman: When the committee rose on Tuesday, February 9, clause 6 of the bill was under consideration. Clause 5 of the bill had been allowed to stand with the amendment of the hon. member for Kootenay West. Is the committee ready for the question on clause 6?

On clause 6—*Protection of environmental quality.*

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Chairman, I want to raise a matter, not by way of a point of order, but as an objection. At this stage we are dealing with clauses 5, 6 and 7, the proposition to establish a department of the environment. It has been announced that this new department will be headed by the present Minister of Fisheries and Forestry and with the passage of this bill and the establishment of this new department, the Department of Fisheries and Forestry will disappear. I think it is incumbent on the government, because of the importance it attaches to this proposal to set up a department of the environment, to have the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry here. He is the person who is to head up this new department; he has been chosen by the government for that purpose. It is unkind of the government—

• (12:20 p.m.)

An hon. Member: Discourteous.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Discourteous, of course; but I was being generous and gentle today, as I always try to be, though dealing with an insensitive government it is difficult to achieve this objective consistently. Certainly, though, the government owes it, if not to Parliament, then at least to the Canadian people, to see that the minister charged with heading the new department is here to deal with the subject from his point of view.

I know the President of the Treasury Board will not accede to this request. If he had felt any sensitivity about it, either he or the Acting Prime Minister would have seen to it that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry was here to handle this matter himself.

Mr. Drury: Perhaps I might comment on the last remarks made by the hon. member for Skeena. As he is, I believe, aware, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has attended—

The Chairman: Is the minister rising on a point of order? It was the understanding of the Chair that the

[Mr. Jamieson.]

minister was rising on a point of order. If I am in error the hon. minister might so indicate.

Mr. Drury: I would find it difficult to classify this intervention as a point of order, so I shall wait.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Then, it obviously has no substance.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): The minister rises to say something, and the only way he can do that is by way of interruption or by way of a point of order or a question of privilege. He declines to pursue the matter in that way. I would not object if he wished to make some statement. Indeed, I am ready to yield the floor so that he might do that.

I see he is not interested.

Mr. Drury: I am. It is just that I find it a little difficult—

The Chairman: Do I understand from the hon. member for Skeena that he is prepared to yield the floor to the minister at this point?

Mr. Howard (Skeena): That is what I said.

The Chairman: There was some confusion about the point of order. I understood the hon. member to say that.

Mr. Drury: I believe the hon. member is aware that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has attended up to the present the discussions in the House on part one of the bill.

An hon. Member: That is not so.

Mr. Drury: He had intended to be here for the continuation of this debate, but I regret to say that because of difficulties in making travel arrangements he is not here this morning.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): It would have helped a great deal if that explanation had been made earlier. Presumably, this leaves us in the position of having to proceed with our consideration of the bill while awaiting the minister's appearance. He may be here later today. I understood the minister to say he encountered travel problems this morning. Perhaps this afternoon he will be here, and able to deal with some of the matters with which we are concerned.

I should like to make reference apropos to what is sought by this particular clause, to the statistical information which was provided yesterday about levels of unemployment, and the degree to which those figures were distorted by the government. I should like to mention how this sort of distortion and flavouring of the statistics relating to the number of people unemployed is used to cover up the real seriousness of the situation. Yesterday, as I understand it, statistics were issued by