

Government Organization Act, 1970

been done since that time. Members opposite smile pleasantly. They feel that women are such suckers that you just have to promise them something and look as though you have some pleasant surprise waiting for them, and they will do anything for you. They think women will eat out of their hands. Women are getting tired of eating out of the hands of the government. Their frame of mind is to bite the hand that is extended to them unless there is something in it besides empty promises.

Women from across the country have for weeks been flooding the offices of members of Parliament with the request that a minister be designated and a ministry created to put these recommendations into effect. They are tired of being told that women's affairs are a high priority, when nothing is being done about them. In his speech of one month ago the Prime Minister said:

Attitude has been the contributor of most of the obstacles which now confront women in Canada. But more than a change of attitude is required in order to overcome discrimination and to provide opportunity. Some laws will have to be changed to eliminate the anomalies and inconsistencies which have crept into our common law system from days when women were regarded as legal chattels; regarded, virtually, as the property of their husbands.

That is as far as he goes. The Prime Minister then indicated that he is appointing people to work on a departmental committee, and so on. We have heard nothing whatsoever about a minister being put in charge of this important matter. I have seen this happen before. For many years the consumers of this country kept after the government to create a ministry of consumer affairs. For years all they were given were pleasant smiles and expectations that such a ministry would be created. A few years ago there was a boycott by women consumers from coast to coast. The women said that the time had come for a minister and a ministry of consumer affairs to be created. If something is not done by governments, it will not be very long before these women will have a wide-scale repeat of that boycott to demand the implementation of these recommendations.

It is all very well to applaud cheerfully whenever this matter is mentioned. The women are sick and tired of tolerant smiles and a superior look on the faces of government members. The time has come for a minister to be appointed so that these recommendations will be put into law. These laws should be within the federal competence. Something should also be done at the provincial level, and the two levels of government must work together. The women do not intend to play around with this any more. The sooner the government recognizes this, the better it will be. After all, the government only needs to take a head count. Half of the voters of this country are women. They are going to make their will felt in no uncertain manner. They do not want to see all the work that has been done by the royal commission go down the drain or put into some pigeon-hole. The government must be very earnest about designating a ministry for the purpose of looking after the implementation of the recommendations of the report on the status of women. I urge that this be done without further delay.

I am very sorry that the Prime Minister could not find time to be here for this important debate tonight. I think

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

he should spare a little more time from his private life, even at the present time, to be in the House to deal with these matters which are of importance to the people of this country. The matter being debated tonight is an important one. I ask the Acting Prime Minister to assure the House that a minister of state will devote his time to the implementation of the recommendations of the report on the status of women. As a matter of fact, I throw out a challenge to the minister because women in this country would be greatly reassured if they had some hard news from here instead of more bouquets given from empty hands.

• (9:30 p.m.)

Mr. Bigg: Mr. Chairman, we have before us another omnibus bill. I shall not spend a great deal of time in criticism of it because I hope to make a positive contribution. I am against a great proliferation in government. I think we have drifted too far into a situation where the government runs all our affairs. However, if the government is to run our affairs, I say for goodness sake let us have a little order in it so that we know where we are going.

If there are to be another five ministers and a corresponding number of parliamentary secretaries, they must give us a better performance than has been the case in respect of the present ministers. We want ministers who will be responsible to Parliament and who will answer our questions. We want ministers who on proper occasions will stand up to a government which is not always sensitive to their ideas. Although the wording of this bill might suggest that more ministers would mean more creative ideas, I suggest that unless there is a great change in attitude we will merely have more servants and the same limited number of ideas coming from a very limited source.

I should like to know why there are more and more regional desks. Regional desks are being set up all over the country so that members of Parliament are no longer consulted. It is no secret that when a public building is to be built or when a post office is about to be opened, on a great many occasions the member of Parliament who should be the first to know about it is the last to know about it. When a new building is to be opened, why should the member of Parliament concerned be asked to remain in the back row during the ceremony? Surely this should not be necessary.

If it is intended that these changes are to bring about participatory government, surely the elected representative of the people should be given a great deal more prominence than he is given at the present time. I believe we have earned it. In most cases we have gone through a proper democratic process in order to get here. There are many people in my district and in the surrounding district who want to know why in this Parliament of which their member is a part he is so discreetly ignored on many occasions. This has distressed me over a period of years and I want to bring it to the attention of the government.

I expect gentlemen opposite to grasp the power they still have, to exert the pressure they could exert and