

Government Organization Act, 1970

policy into operation, at that time, I suggest, we could proceed under the first part of this bill to establish government departments and the duties, responsibilities and manner of functioning of certain people will all be clearly set out in the statute.

For those limited number of cases in which there is a problem and in which the immediate need does not call for the operation of subsequent programs but for the seeking of solutions, particularly in those fields where jurisdiction is not exclusively federal but is mixed and calls for a good deal of consultation with the provinces rather than the operation of programs by themselves, this is the kind of instrument, it seems to me, that can more adequately meet our needs.

As I indicated, although this bill provides that the Governor in Council will be able to name the minister without the necessity of further parliamentary approval, it is, as I think all hon. members will understand, impossible for that minister to have a staff to do the work of analysis, of problem solving and of proposing, unless funds are provided to him for that staff. This money can only be provided by Parliament through either the main appropriations, if that is the appropriate cycle when it occurs, or through supplementary appropriations if it occurs at some time other than the beginning of the main estimates cycle.

When one looks a little more into the kind of proposal that is being made here, and relates it to the kind of parliamentary tradition into which we have grown, I think it will be seen that a great many of the apprehensions and fears expressed are perhaps groundless. I suggest that this proposal will not then appear quite as alarming as the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants quite honestly, I think, suggested it was.

One other advantage of this kind of proposal may be seen if one considers the kinds of problems that a minister of state might deal with, as suggested by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway the other day. This is something that has arisen relatively recently and consists of an area of interest, or an area of problems which does not fit neatly into our classical patterns of government organization or, indeed, thought. These problems range at a variety of levels horizontally across the whole government apparatus. A minister who will look at the Canadian perspective with this particular aspect of it in view will, I think, be able to make many useful suggestions which can be implemented. They could be implemented, not necessarily by himself or by a department which he might head but by other departments and other agencies.

When he has done this particular job and there does not appear to be a continuing need for this kind of analysis and policy suggestion, then keeping the apparatus in being any longer clearly would not be a useful application of the resources provided by the taxpayer. Then it ought to be dispensed with and our energies devoted to other problems which might take on new forms as suggested by clause 14. I think this, in so far as parliamentary operation and particularly parliamentary control is concerned, is of some significance.

One point made during the course of this debate was that this bill, as an omnibus bill, was unsatisfactory in

[Mr. Drury.]

that it covered so many subjects that it was impossible for hon. members and for the House to focus adequately on a particular principle and give it the kind of consideration which clear focusing would allow. It was said that because of the wideness, range and number of topics involved, focusing in relation to this bill was very difficult.

• (9:30 p.m.)

In terms of the ministry, it would be of considerable assistance to the House, particularly during the interesting 40 minutes per day which we have, if in relation to a current problem there was one minister who was clearly charged with responsibility for that particular item. To again refer to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, at the present time there is no minister to whom the members of the House can point the finger of responsibility: it is diffused.

The Prime Minister obviously cannot provide detailed answers for the whole range of subjects in which the administration is engaged. Consequently, the House does not get a satisfactory accounting. The ministry is not as accountable to the House as it would be with the kind of focusing which clause 14 would make possible. With this kind of arrangement, rather than Parliament having its powers eroded and losing authority it would, if intelligently used, find its real power—knowledge and power, in this world in which we live, are synonymous—through increased accountability and responsibility of minister for specific needs.

Rather than have what the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants is afraid might be the case, I suggest as strongly as I can that not only is it the intention of the government that it should be so, but Parliament, particularly the House of Commons, will find its power, authority, credibility and—to use a rather overworked term—relevancy enhanced.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for his contribution in spite of the fact that a large number of government members have spoken on this issue in the past few days. Most have used their time whimpering, whining and bleating about filibustering. The minister at least made an effort to attack the problem. It is refreshing to see someone go to the root of the issue rather than talk nonsense about filibustering.

I have examined the record. On this particular issue, probably the most important one in the bill, only 2½ days have been spent. Up to the present time approximately 9½ hours have been used to debate this particular measure. I say to those members who are wringing their hands, whining and crying about filibustering, that there are five important areas which can be the subject of the creation of ministries of state. Three or four have already been identified by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants. They are housing, science and the status of women.