

Government Organization Act, 1970

introduced the idea of appointing Parliamentary Secretaries on a two-year basis, and 28 of these could be appointed for each two-year period, making 56 altogether. There would be two Deputy Speakers, one for each two-year period, and there would be two Deputy Chairmen of committee of the whole House. On the basis of assuming a change every two years, there would be a whip and assistant whip, each for a two-year period, and 18 chairmen of committees, or 36 over four years.

● (8:20 p.m.)

These are maximum figures. One assumes that the Prime Minister of the day would not make all these appointments, but even if he made a number it is obvious there would be titles enough, and in most cases emoluments enough, for more than 100 members of the governing party in a four-year term. Certainly this is one way to develop prime ministerial patronage.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McCleave: You must wait for the Prime Minister to get back. I cannot help you.

Mr. Otto: There is always room for a backbencher.

Mr. McCleave: There speaks an honest backbencher. Fate has not been very kind to him, but he is always in there pitching and one knows that he exists.

Mr. Ricard: And he always speaks right.

Mr. McCleave: My colleague points out a further virtue of his, namely, that he always speaks right no matter what he says. I suggest there is a large element of prime ministerial patronage in the proposed set-up. Members on this side get hungry, too. I would not have said that but my banker thought I should speak out, and he does have some influence on me. There are members on this side with responsibilities and difficulties, too. We work just as hard but are somewhat down on our luck in a war on poverty that has been solved so successfully for one crowd but not the other. As I say, this proposal has enormous potential for patronage in the hands of one man and I do not think it will be accepted very easily by Canadians who at the moment, at least, seem to be in some sort of mood for political change. I know this has happened at all levels in Nova Scotia and recently in New Brunswick, and it threatens to happen in other provinces simply because people are concerned about what seems to be lack of sufficient regard for the tax dollar by people who have been elected. These people will not be happy at the vast increase in titles on Parliament Hill.

The only exception I make to this is my approval of the salary to be paid to the minister now in charge of the Post Office. I do not think anybody on the opposition side would say this is not justice. It is justice. He took on a miserable job. He had to clean the stables and solve the difficulties created by another person who was getting full ministerial salary, whereas the present minister is only at the level of Minister without Portfolio. That is

[Mr. McCleave.]

unjust and I am cheered to see that the bill will right at least that injustice. One other point I should like to make about the increase in the number of those around the Prime Minister, ministers of state, extra Parliamentary Secretaries and the like, is that at least this means there will be almost twice as many people to share the burden of forgetting.

I come now to the provision of the bill dealing with the Public Service of Canada and the question of early retirement from the public service. This provision is so different from the rest that I wondered why it was included in the first place. It did cross my mind that perhaps this section of the bill was more connected with the reorganization of the government than we first imagined, and that it would open up a vast senior level of the public service of Canada for appointments by the government. While there has been talk about people retiring, from my reading of the legislation there might also be the retirement of people; that is to say, showing them the door at an early age, as well as people themselves stepping over to open it and to march out into retirement. This is a question that will occupy us very much when we study the meaning of the legislation.

If I am correct in assuming that there may be a danger in this regard of forcing out people below normal retirement age, then we are opening up a very substantial question indeed, because it would mean that the government could, in effect, sweep aside top level public servants and replace them with government hirelings. If that is the case—and there is some suspicion on this side that this is exactly what the Prime Minister is aiming to do—this step will be resisted.

Be that as it may, there is one part of the legislation that is absolutely abhorrent. It is that the early retirement proposals can be imposed through inaction in committee of the whole House with nobody being given the opportunity to appear on behalf of civil service associations to express their view on this measure. I think this is wrong. I remember a couple of years ago being a member of a joint parliamentary committee of which the hon. member for Ottawa East (Mr. Richard) was co-chairman. That committee dealt for a substantial period of time with some very important changes to legislation dealing with the public service of Canada. I say that this issue is as important as any that we dealt with at that time. I say, further, that public service associations and others should be given an opportunity to appear and express their views. I know the Public Service Alliance has endorsed the idea in principle, and that I understand. There is still a pretty good point to be made, that one has to study the ramifications to find out whether these associations are speaking for their memberships or, as often happens on the Ottawa scene, whether the statements are being made for a few in the name of man's.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Finally, Sir, I am generally surprised by the bill and I question again the horrendous form in which it is presented to us. I do not intend to scout the point of order I raised this afternoon, which was dealt with so capably by members on all sides and by the ruling of Mr. Speaker. I