

now the minister discharges the duties of his position with credit to himself and the country in view of the short period he has been in office, and it would be a reflection on the province of Ontario to denude him of any portion of his functions. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Hon. Mr. Préfontaine) no doubt took part in preparing the announcement in the speech from the Throne, that there would be a reorganization of this department. He was bold to take upon himself to declare in the province of Quebec that the department would be divided and to circulate his declaration in the press, but when he sat in this House a few nights ago he was not so bold. He was not—may I say, man enough—to get up and say whether the statement he made in Maisonneuve was true or not true. We found the other evening that the gentleman who is now leading the House (Hon. Mr. Fielding) was afraid to trust his friend (Hon. Mr. Préfontaine) who had been too glib on many other occasions, to reply to the question put to him, and so he endeavoured to protect the baby Minister of Marine and Fisheries—I mean baby in the sense that he is the younger member of the cabinet. Then, when the attention of the Prime Minister was drawn to this matter, in order to relieve the tension, he promised that he would announce the policy of the government on this question in a day or two, but we have waited for many days and no announcement has been made. In view of the announcement in the speech from the Throne; in view of the statement made in this House a few days ago, we want to know now what the policy of the government is before we vote any more money. I warn the government that it will be a very dangerous thing for them if they attempt to divide that department. If the present minister (Hon. Mr. Sutherland) is not administering his department well, then the honourable thing to do is to ask him for his resignation, but do not cast a reflection on the province of Ontario by saying in effect that the hon. gentleman (Hon. Mr. Sutherland) is not capable of administering the Department of Public Works. If I were to believe all that I have read in the Montreal 'Herald,' and all that I have read in the Montreal 'Witness' with respect to the conduct of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Hon. Mr. Préfontaine) when he filled an important office in the city of Montreal; if I were to believe all the statements that have come from his own political friends, then I would hesitate much to see a change made in the Department of Public Works, which is one of the great spending departments in this Dominion. I warn the government that in the province of Ontario, and I have no doubt in the other provinces as well, there will be a strong feeling of resentment at such a change taking place. I trust that if the government have any idea of making this change, they will at

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once change that idea, because I can assure them that this country will not tolerate a change of that character.

Mr. CLANCY. The ministers cannot afford to sit there in complacent silence and take no notice of what has been said from this side of the House. I ask the leader of the House if it is not fair play that we should now know what the proposed reorganization of the Department of Marine and Fisheries is to be. It was announced in the speech from the Throne, and the Minister of Marine and Fisheries no doubt sat at the Council Table when that announcement was prepared. Knowing what the mind of the government was before that, he went to his constituents and made the announcement in more detail, and now the leader of the House is in all justice bound to tell us what is the intention of the government with regard to this matter.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I have no wish to be discourteous, but I think that my hon. friend (Mr. Clancy) has overlooked the fact that the question was asked some days ago, and that all the information that it was proper to give to this question was then politely given. Life is too short to have these things repeated every day.

Mr. CLANCY. The hon. gentleman has with politeness and splendid indefiniteness answered my question. Let me remind him, however, that when questions are not answered they can be asked again. We will take care to remind the hon. gentleman that the question is not properly answered. Does he mean to say that when a policy is announced in the speech from the Throne, it becomes a state secret. Does he think that this is not a proper thing for the country to know, especially when we are voting money for this department, what are the details of a change of such importance. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman if he is dealing with the House as candidly and frankly as he ought to on a question of this kind? When he says that life is too short to answer, he is not quite courteous, implying that it was not a proper question to ask. That is not the way to dispose of the matter, because it is a question on which the House has a right to have information when we are proposing to vote money for the services of the country. I would be the last to press for information on an important question of policy that had not been matured; but this matter has been thought out, and now the hon. gentleman says life is too short to answer the question.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Life is too short to keep on answering it.

Mr. CLANCY. Did the hon. gentleman ever answer it?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Yes.