

time when we should be dealing with something to help combat unemployment.

● (3:20 p.m.)

It is very difficult to figure out this new cabinet arrangement. The bill will certainly take control of certain matters out of the hands of the House and put it into the hands of the executive. I do not approve of that. As an elected representative, I feel that I ought to have the opportunity of voicing my opinion and of voting on whether a certain ministry shall be set up. I should have the right to say whether I think it is necessary or not, and to vote either for or against its establishment. Yet the bill, as drafted, will make us into mere rubberstamps. That I do not like. It is quite plain that that is the direction in which we are heading. I am, therefore, sorry that the government saw fit to bring forward Bill C-207 respecting the organization of the government of Canada.

**Mr. Steven Otto (York East):** Mr. Speaker, having heard the minister speak and having heard from gentlemen opposite, I am at a loss to understand whether this bill actually is a bill dealing with the reorganization of the government. Is it, as the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) seemed to indicate, a bill that will enable us to deal with our environment? According to the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) and the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales), this bill will answer the purposes of backbenchers on this side of the House in that it will provide employment, at greater pay, for many of them.

**Mr. McCleave:** The hon. member is hoping.

**Mr. Otto:** The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants suggests that since many new positions will be made available under this bill, very few backbenchers will be left in the House. I want to assure him that he and I will always enjoy a position on the backbenches.

**Mr. McCleave:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Otto:** He will remain there because he will be in opposition, and I will remain here because I have been on the backbenches for the last eight years. I see the minister laughing.

**An hon. Member:** The hon. member is a good Member of Parliament.

**Mr. Otto:** Thank you. I am considered a good member. I intend to deal with the bill. May I, first, say something about the academic discussion on the bill. We were privileged with a tutorial from the cardinal, His Eminence, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury). I am sure he will not mind being called the Richelieu of Ottawa. After all, Cardinal Richelieu was one of the most famous administrators of all time, the mandarin of mandarins.

**Mr. McCleave:** But was he not connected with a religious order?

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

**Mr. Otto:** He was a professional administrator, and there is no doubt as to who was the power behind the throne in those days. Similarly, I have no doubt as to who is the power behind the throne in this country in these days. I, therefore, think it quite proper to refer to the President of the Treasury Board as "His Eminence".

**Mr. McCleave:** The minister is being blamed for much. I expect him to rise on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Otto:** I should like to take into account, for a moment, the historical background of Parliament. We are told almost daily that the Members of Parliament control the purse strings and the final disposition of money. I submit that that is an Alice in Wonderland type of proposition, because we all know that the amounts voted on the estimates are governed, to a great extent, by the needs of administrators who want the money. We see the estimates, but we provide no check. We obtain no information as to what this money is to be used for exactly, why it is needed and for what purpose.

**An hon. Member:** That is a secret.

**Mr. Otto:** That is how it is now. The President of the Treasury Board was quite right in saying that the reorganization of the government really affects the structure of the government and that it is within the competence of the government to carry this out. He spoke of the historical background. Previously it was the prerogative of the Crown, acting through the Privy Council, to bring about such changes. That tradition has gone. Now, the government must seek the approval of the House when it wishes to reorganize itself. Reorganization is really a government responsibility. The government is responsible for the conduct of its affairs. I am inclined to the belief, Mr. Speaker, that we may be reverting to the old system. I ask the minister to consider whether there is no possibility of our returning to the old methods of acting in Parliament. Under the reign of this Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—and I use the word "reign" advisedly—perhaps we ought to consider whether we should not revert to ancient practices in which all members of the House, whether on the government side or the opposition, joined together in opposition to the ministry.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Otto:** Without any doubt in the world, I think the Prime Minister at present has the absolute mandate of the people. I am not saying this in any derogatory way; I am saying it out of admiration. I ask people whose noses are freezing outside the West Block in winter or who are roasting there in summer, "Why are you here?" They say that they want to see the Prime Minister. Recently the Prime Minister went to the Maritimes, one of our poorer areas, and then he went out west before the wheat had been sold. He came back a hero. Judging from that, I do not think there is any doubt that he will command the allegiance of the people of Canada for a long time to come. I, therefore, feel that Members of Parliament could well revert to the position that they enjoyed previously in history before the organization of parties.