

Government Organization Act, 1970

lion allotment or grant to a certain group in this country—it may be a good or bad thing; I am not disputing that—I should like to point out that I raised a question relating to a grant from the government on behalf of the black people involved in the Black United Front at Sydney, Nova Scotia, in order to set up a day-care centre, something they are working at very hard.

If Your Honour would explain to me why that question was out of order and a reply not allowed, I would appreciate it. Surely to heaven a small group like this can get a grant from the federal government, or are the black people different from other groups to which the government gives grants?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will have noted that the Chair did not suggest that the matter was not important; it is obviously important. The hon. member has raised the question on previous occasions. I suggest to him that the question asked today was in the form of a representation. He subsequently raised a point of order and again I suggested he was making a representation. I would again suggest to him that the point of order he is now raising is in the form of a submission to the government.

I recognize the importance of this matter. If the question period was taken up to some extent with one particular subject matter, that cannot be the responsibility of the Chair. After a while I did try to suggest to hon. members that we might go on to another subject. If the hon. member has been penalized thereby, I am sorry. Perhaps the question might be raised tomorrow.

Mr. Muir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is always another day.

• (3:00 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION ACT, 1970**

PROVISIONS RESPECTING DEPARTMENTAL REORGANIZATION, MINISTRIES OF STATE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES, ETC.

Hon. C. M. Drury (for the Prime Minister) moved that Bill C-207, respecting the organization of the government of Canada and matters related or incidental thereto, be read the second time and referred to the committee of the whole.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants is rising on a point of order.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Speaker, my point of order concerns the motion that this bill be read a second time and referred to committee of the whole. I suggest that the motion not be put because the bill contains at least seven distinct proposals or principles; at least, I will argue that

[Mr. Muir.]

it does, though the number may be less depending on one's attitude to the various sections of the bill. Be that as it may, I suggest to Your Honour that there is more than one proposal or principle involved in this bill, and therefore, having regard to the very ancient privilege of the House that members should not be asked to give simple answers to what are, in effect, several questions intermingled together, I ask Your Honour to take the position of ordering that the bill be divided when the vote comes so that hon. members have a chance to make a decision on each proposal.

To lay the foundation for my argument, may I first note that there are these separate provisions in Bill C-207. The first part, clauses 2 to 7, creates a Department of the Environment. The second part, clauses 8 to 11, amends two acts: the Government Organization Act of 1966, and the Resources and Technical Surveys Act. The third part, clause 12, amends the National Research Council Act. The fourth part, clauses 13 to 24, creates ministries and ministers of state. The fifth part of the bill, clause 25, amends the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, otherwise known as "answering the prayers of the hungry". The sixth part, clause 26, amends the Post Office Act. The seventh part, clause 27, amends the Public Service Superannuation Act. The eighth part, clause 28, amends the Salaries Act. Finally, part nine, clauses 29 to 34, contains general and transitional provisions, and these may be apportioned variously among the other parts.

If we were to pass Bill C-207 and it became an act of this parliament, there would have to be ten separate entries made in the index of statutes passed this session. There would have to be nine consequential amendments to seven additional statutes that are amended by schedule B of this measure, and these would also have to be indexed separately. I am suggesting we have a measure here that covers the waterfront.

To recapitulate in a slightly different way, we are being asked to create a new department; we are being asked to vary administrative duties of some existing departments; we are being asked to create ministers of the Crown who will formulate and develop government policy and, as well as providing for these salaried ministers, we are being asked to provide for additional salaried Parliamentary Secretaries. Distinct from those matters, we are also asked to vote yea or nay, without hearing witnesses, on behalf of those affected on the question of the retirement rights and obligations of public servants. I think you would agree that is a most unusual step.

These are propositions contained in the measure, some of which deal with people within my vision, or who would be within my vision if we had full attendance here, and others who are outside this House. I suggest that this does strike at the right of parliamentarians to decide questions with a simple yes or no, without having to consider very complicated questions which cannot be answered very simply. This is absolutely impossible. There is a solution which would enable us to avoid this situation. I suggest it is found in a precedent established in this House by a ruling of Mr. Speaker Macnaughton on the flag resolution and also in English practice. I will