

Government Organization Act, 1970

will be called upon to perform are greater than those of the ordinary otherwise not specially rewarded Member of Parliament. Therefore, there should be some supplementary stipend over and above that of an ordinary member of the House of Commons. Undoubtedly, one could say that although they will have additional responsibilities, they will also have additional dignity and this additional dignity should be adequate compensation. I am not sure that this is in line with our general philosophy of rewarding a man in monetary terms commensurate with his responsibilities. Therefore, I cannot accept the suggestion that we would save money by merely suggesting to the ministers who are appointed that they should accept the additional responsibilities and regard the added dignity which is attached to the position as adequate compensation.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board one or two questions on this issue. I will probably have more to say after the minister answers. I do not mean that as a threat. I would like to know just what the intentions of the government are with regard to the cabinet structure. At the present time there are ministers who are responsible for a department and who report to the House accordingly. There are also ministers without portfolio. In future there are to be two new positions, ministers of state who will be responsible for a ministry of state and ministers of state who will be responsible for assisting other ministers. In other words, four classes of minister will be on the executive council. To what extent will each share in the decision-making process? Is it the intention to adopt a new cabinet structure making provision for a small, inner cabinet?

● (3:30 p.m.)

I have in mind, of course, the remarks made by the hon. member for Trinity who is most concerned about this aspect. Some of the rest of us are concerned about it as well. What will be the ranking of the cabinet in future? What is the general intention? These are questions of some consequence, because I do not think it can be said that the administrative competence of the government has been so high that the House can afford to pass a measure of this kind without inquiring in detail as to the government's intentions. I am particularly interested in the ranking and duties of these ministers. I know that these duties are to some extent outlined in the legislation. But what are the government's intentions? Are they strictly honourable?

Mr. Drury: With regard to the last question, I can answer it very shortly and very positively. Yes. There has probably been sufficient indication given concerning the functions and the place of these new ministers to enable me to answer the other questions.

As far as ranking is concerned, they will all be members of the Queen's Privy Council when appointed and will rank according to the rules of precedence of that body. They will, in accordance with our current convention, be members of the cabinet as are all ministers. To

[Mr. Drury.]

the best of my knowledge there has been no plan announced to form different levels or tiers of cabinet. As I believe the House is aware, the Prime Minister has endeavoured to decentralize the work of the cabinet and make it more effective by providing for particular consideration of most areas by small groups of ministers, cabinet committees, prior to decision-taking or resolution by the cabinet as a whole. The ministers to be appointed ministers of state with a ministry, or ministers of state without a ministry, or ministers without portfolio will fit into that pattern and it is not proposed to establish different levels of cabinet.

The duties of these ministers are outlined fairly well in a general way in the proposed legislation. In the case of ministers of state, they will be appointed to preside over a ministry of state and they will fulfil duties similar to those of ministers with departments for whose supervision they are responsible. The nature of those responsibilities will be indicated either in the form of a draft bill in the case of a department or by way of a draft order in council in the case of ministers of state.

I hope this explanation will enlighten the hon. gentleman sufficiently for him to be able to see that there is no new revolutionary process contemplated here.

Mr. Baldwin: I shudder at the words "revolutionary process" used by the President of the Treasury Board because I must say, honestly and objectively, that the cabinet changes so far introduced by the Prime Minister have been nothing less than a complete disaster.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Baldwin: When we look at the results, it is. I am not talking about the personnel, those who have been promoted, or who have kept their positions. I am talking about the administrative incompetence we have observed from this side of the House. I do not know about hon. members sitting on the back rows opposite. Since they see only the backs of the ministers perhaps they do not observe what we observe over here. But as far as we are concerned, the changes have been nothing short of disastrous and I intend to prove this statement beyond a shadow of a doubt. The blundering, the stumbling, the over rigidity of the cabinet committee structure, the examples of ministers falling over each other's feet, the duplication, triplication and quadruplication of ministers' responsibilities, the lack of liaison, and so on have been astonishing. It is necessary for me to establish this statement because the intentions of the government are still in doubt. The President of the Treasury Board told us he did not know how many new ministers would be appointed. My guess is that there will be quite a number.

When the apologists for the government start on their work they talk, because there is nothing else for them to say, about the marvellous efficiency of the present administration. That is absolute nonsense. When this session opened on October 8 last year His Excellency referred to a number of measures which the government intended to put forward. These were subsequently outlined in greater detail by the Prime Minister when he gave a list in the House of some 68 measures which were