

Mr. Speaker, the government motion that we are presently debating seeks approval of an Order in Council in relation to the establishment of a ministry of state for urban affairs, period. The housing designation has apparently been dropped by cabinet some time between October 8 last and last Friday. This illustrates that occasionally even this bureaucratic government can, and will, see the light. It also points up the half-baked nature of the Speech from the Throne. I do not now, and never did, think the "housing" appellation was a proper one. I think the designation "urban affairs" is sufficiently inclusive of housing and that the spelling out of a special responsibility for housing might not sit well with some of the provinces. Regard should be had for their sensibilities. After all, they have substantial jurisdiction and primacy in the field of housing. All they want from Ottawa in urban affairs is financial help, co-operation in the coordination of standards and the proper provision of services for which the federal government has responsibility.

Speaking of responsibility, I feel that the minister of state for urban affairs probably will have one of the most responsible portfolios in the cabinet. Much will depend upon how much he dedicates himself to the task and how diplomatically he conducts himself, not only with the representatives of the provinces and municipalities but also with those of his colleagues in such portfolios as Public Works, Transportation, the Post Office, Manpower and Immigration, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Citizenship and, above all, the Department of the Secretary of State which is contributing so much to moral pollution in this country at taxpayer expense. He may, however, in the last instance, find that he has to forget about diplomacy and get tough with the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. Pelletier).

Although the minister designate for urban affairs stepped over the provincial jurisdiction line and recently was rather badly bruised in an encounter with Hon. Allan Grossman in Ontario when he injudiciously and unwarrantedly called for fixed rents for two years on low-income public housing, he is still the only man with any experience in this new field and I am sure he will learn where to step in, where not to, when to speak and when to say nothing.

● (8:40 p.m.)

The proclamation for this new ministry for which approval of the House is now sought is a very carefully worked out instrument; in fact, it is overworked. It gives the new ministry of state power to formulate and develop policies in relation to the activities of the government of Canada that affect the urban environment through measures within fields of federal jurisdiction. But clause 5 of the government reorganization Bill C-207 says that the duties, powers and functions of the Minister of the Environment extend to and include all matters over which the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction. Some questions therefore arise: for example, how close can the Minister of the Environment come to Moosonee when legislating for James Bay, and how far can Montreal's sewage go into the St. Lawrence River?

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The quality of life in our cities must be improved; we are all agreed on that. But it will not be if there is to be such ambiguity between the responsibilities of ministers. The public will not care which minister clears up the problem of the E. B. Eddy Company across the river in Hull, or whether the National Capital Commission will do it. This is a physical environment problem for which all three apparently have responsibility; and so, of course, does the province of Quebec.

Here we have an excellent example of how to get people all mixed up so that much is spent and nothing is accomplished. This is typical of the government's performance—all image and no substance! But the image blurs as its leader get fuzziier and fuzziier.

The minister himself admits that the ambit of his new ministry is wide. His sway is mighty across the land. The Minister of the Environment is in much the same position. The country and this House will want to have clearly defined just where the influence and the power of each minister begins and ceases, otherwise how can our municipalities and private industries with pollution problems know where to go or whom to believe?

I was glad to hear the minister say that the meeting scheduled for August 25 in Victoria will be a tri-level meeting. I believe that originally he contemplated having only a two-level meeting with just himself and the provincial ministers. I take it from what he said this evening that now municipalities will be invited to that meeting, which should speed up things. But with the formation of the ministry of state for urban affairs a standing committee of the House of Commons for urban affairs should be instituted also.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ryan: Otherwise we will have the same jungle in which the ministry will find itself. How can anyone interested in urban affairs be expected to go from the Committee on National Health and Welfare, dealing with CMHC, to the Committee on Transport and then to the committee dealing with the estimates of the Secretary of State, and so on to other committees? It just cannot be done, especially if we are also to put in any time in the House. I suggest that it will be absolutely necessary for a new standing committee on urban affairs to be established, even if it means winding up two or three other committees.

Mr. Baldwin: An opposition member in the chair would help.

Mr. Ryan: I have already mentioned moral pollution. I think in this area we will have a man as the new minister who is prepared to do something. I think his influence on other departments which are making grants and loans should be, and will be, great.

An hon. Member: What about the minister and Rochdale?

Mr. Ryan: He himself cannot escape from some responsibility, although he was not around when the