

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

**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 third time and do pass.

• (3:10 p.m.)

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Mr. Speaker, when the bill was in committee of the whole a number of amendments were moved which resulted in fairly extensive debate. One of these amendments was subsequently withdrawn because the government decided to meet us part way with regard to the clause dealing with the new department of the environment.

We expressed fears that the downgrading of the Department of Fisheries in this manner would have very serious consequences on the fishing industry in Canada, particularly the thousands of Canadians who are dependent upon that industry for their livelihood. To give meaning to our fears we moved a number of amendments, one of which was to set up two deputy ministers under the new department of the environment, one of whom would have responsibility for the fishing industry: he would be designated as the deputy minister of fisheries in the same way as the two deputy ministers in the Department of National Health and Welfare—one is designated as the deputy minister of health and the other is designated as the deputy minister of welfare.

This amendment was rejected by the government and subsequently debated in committee of the whole. However, the government decided to bring in an amendment indicating that the Minister of the Environment shall be the Minister of Fisheries; in other words, designating that there shall continue to be a Minister of Fisheries. A clause to this effect was inserted in the bill by the committee.

At that time I argued, as did the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), that if you are to have a Minister of Fisheries it is necessary to have a consequential amendment to clause 4 of the bill to provide for a deputy minister of fisheries. It would be virtually the same amendment. In other words, we would indicate that the deputy minister of the environment would be the deputy minister of fisheries.

I find it difficult to understand why the government would reject this suggestion or why they did not incorporate it in their amendment in the first instance. It seems logical that one follows the other. It would help substantially to alleviate our fears for the future of the fishing industry, particularly with regard to the attention the industry will receive under the new departmental set-up.

We believe the bill now before the House is an improved bill. It is a better bill as a result of the debate which took place in committee of the whole. It is not nearly as repugnant to us in so far as the fishing industry is concerned. We would have liked "Fisheries" incorporated in the title of the department. This is what we set out to do by our amendment. Our amendment sought to change the proposed title from "Department of the Environment" to "Department of Fisheries and the Envi-

[Mr. Speaker.]

ronment." However, we are reasonably happy that there will continue to be a Minister of Fisheries.

For the same reasons we believe there should continue to be a deputy minister of fisheries. I reject out of hand the argument put forward by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury), that in order for there to be a deputy minister of fisheries there has to be a department of fisheries. This is not so, because the bill which sets up new ministers of state will also set up the equivalent of deputy ministers. They will be called secretaries, but they will be deputy ministers. They will not have the responsibility of presiding over a department of government in the traditional sense. I do not think that argument holds water.

When you examine the new departmental organization of the proposed department of the environment, the idea of having a deputy minister of fisheries makes all the more sense. Under the new departmental set-up the department will be presided over by a minister. Under him will be a deputy minister who will presumably be the deputy minister of the environment. Under him will be a senior assistant deputy minister. Under him will be seven assistant deputy ministers. One of these seven assistant deputy ministers will have responsibility for what will henceforth be known as the fisheries division. He is not even the first among equals.

Under the departmental set-up the first assistant deputy will be the assistant deputy minister in charge of atmospheric environment, then the assistant deputy minister of fisheries, who will be chairman of the fisheries research board, then the assistant deputy minister of lands, forests and wildlife, the assistant deputy minister of water management, the assistant deputy minister of environmental protection, the assistant deputy minister of finance and administration, and the assistant deputy minister of policy planning and research. We do not think that is good enough. We believe that heretofore the Department of Fisheries and Forestry has been a full-time job. It required the attention of a full-time minister, deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers, the services of approximately 13,000 civil servants and a budget in excess of \$200 million.

Surely the government would be the last to suggest that because of this change in organization and the establishment of this new department the importance of the present Department of Fisheries and Forestry will diminish. However, that is what is implied by the refusal of the government to accept our argument that in addition to continuing to have a minister designated as Minister the same argument can be applied to continuing to have a deputy minister of fisheries. It is a simple matter of accepting the same principle. In committee of the whole we accepted and embodied that principle by an amendment to the bill providing that the Minister of the Environment shall be the Minister of Fisheries. It is logical and consequential that the deputy minister of the environment shall be the deputy minister of fisheries.

Why the government refused to accept that suggestion is difficult, if not impossible to understand, especially in