

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

Today, I speak in support of this new government measure. In the past, I have had, in my capacity as a simple member, the opportunity of requesting a better governmental organization that would admit of more rigid control over the rational development of our natural resources and that would allow for the passing of more adequate conservation measures. And on this question, I agree with the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) who has said so eloquently, and I quote:

We all agree that the idea of having one minister responsible for pollution control and for the preservation of our environment is a good one. It is being suggested that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) will probably be appointed to that post. He is a man who has always been deeply concerned about pollution problems. He comes from a part of Canada where we have seen some of the devastating effects of pollution, in particular its effects on our fishing industry, and I think the choice of that minister to become head of a department of the environment is a good one.

Some will say this new department should have been established several years ago. Undeniably, the new name, Department of Environment, will focus attention particularly in the fight against pollution but it is wrong to claim that up to now the government was not concerned with the problem. In fact, excellent legislation has been introduced here, sponsored by other departments, since the early days of this Parliament,—and I give as an example, the Canada Water Act, which in the future will come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment. For a good number of years, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry had some prerogatives that enabled him to conduct the fight against water pollution in particular. It would be fair to say that water pollution has always been a major concern of the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry.

Besides, the idea of setting up a Department of Environment is beginning to take form in several if not all provincial governments and specially in New Brunswick where they decided to follow the example set by the federal government. They cannot be blamed. On the contrary, they deserve encouragement.

Some will say that it was not necessary to reorganize certain elements of the administration. The answer to that is that times have changed and the government must necessarily adapt its structures to the priorities of the day. In fact, it has to act before a crisis develops and in the present situation, it must try to protect ecology.

I think that the new department will neither be too big nor too powerful, if the need for it is recognized from the start. This is too serious a time, Mr. Speaker, to linger on idle considerations.

I believe that all hon. members sincerely acknowledge the need for the new department responsible for the balanced management and control of our renewable resources as well as the quality of the natural and human environment. Some will say we do not go far enough, others that we are too late, that we did not act quickly enough, etc. If those people are sincere, they will not hesitate to adopt the proposal presently under study. As a matter of fact, I invite them to bring forward some

[Mr. Corbin.]

constructive criticism, and not some purely partisan considerations, in order to help the government carry out its mandate in an enlightened way.

I listened yesterday to all hon. members who spoke on this bill. I heard the hon. member for Kootenay-West (Mr. Harding) read some extracts from the 9th review of the Economic Council of Canada, advocating the establishment of an environment council. I am happy that he is considering this recommendation seriously.

A little over a week ago, the hon. member for Malpeque (Mr. MacLean) urged the government to establish a human environment council. Rising to speak on that occasion, I quoted several passages from the 9th review of the Economic Council.

There is no problem here. To my mind, all members as well as the government agree that it would be useful and appropriate to create such a council whose task would be to give advice and recommendations and perhaps suggest bold and positive policies. This environment council will probably be established eventually and I hope it will be soon.

The member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) has expressed the fear that the fisheries service, and in the end all the services provided to fishermen until now, would be lost in this new Department of the Environment.

I can understand his point of view, but the minister has already given us assurance that it will not be so. The fisheries service will keep its identity; it will continue to give improved services and to suggest bolder policies in connection with all Canadian fisheries, whether they be Atlantic or Pacific coast fisheries, Arctic or soft water fisheries.

It would be wrong for any member to interpret the merger of the Department of Fisheries and the Department of the Environment as a death blow to fisheries or even as a lack of interest on the part of the government in one of the oldest and most respected occupations in North America.

I would even go as far as saying that any member who would so interpret the creation of the new department would be practicing partisan politics. This having been said, I admit that any member has a right to speak that way. To me, such a stand would denote that he has not understood the significant objectives proposed by the government in instituting the important Department of the Environment.

• (4:30 p.m.)

On reading the remarks of the hon. member for South Shore, I noticed certain parts which give me some concern as to his objectivity. I still respect the strength of his arguments, but I do not know what the hon. member meant yesterday. He wanted to act as the spokesman for his party, for the fishing industry, with regard to Bill C-207. I could not help noticing the confusion of his assertions.

On the one hand, he clearly admitted that he agreed in principle with certain parts of the bill, such as the Part I,