

member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), in his speech today indicating that he and his colleagues were going to oppose this resolution. He set out his reasons for doing so. Quite frankly, I found it difficult to appreciate what he was saying because what he was saying, in effect, was that he was opposed to this kind of planning and co-ordination. It has to be a first for this House when the distinguished and learned member who is the spokesman for the NDP on matters relating to all aspects of social policy indicates that, in this particular field, he is against the kind of planning that is called for in this resolution.

We support the resolution. We support it because we believe that this kind of planning and co-ordination of social programs is vitally essential. What concerns us, however, is what appears to be the rather indifferent approach of the government to the proposal setting up the new ministry.

For example, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), who has a very important role to play in this program and who, indeed, will have to develop a very special kind of relationship with the new minister of state for social development, was not in her seat today. I am sure that the minister has very important public business which is keeping her elsewhere, but the fact is that when we raised this question in the standing committee on Friday last, when we had the minister before us with her estimates, she indicated to us in reply to a question as to just exactly what was the relationship of her portfolio with the new ministry of state for social development that these questions would be addressed when the debate was before the House on Monday. I listened very carefully to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien). He made no reference whatsoever to his role as he sees it vis-à-vis the role of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

When we consider that the Minister of National Health and Welfare, apart from perhaps veterans affairs and certain responsibilities relating to the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, is vested under the statutes of this House with the responsibility of preparing and delivering social programs in this country, it is difficult to understand how the Minister of Justice could rise in his place today and speak as he did without defining just exactly what the role of the Minister of National Health and Welfare is vis-à-vis the new ministry of state for social development. Indeed, I would expect, considering that this is only a seven-hour debate, that the minister would be in her place and would speak to this very problem because that is the one aspect of the proposal before us which, quite frankly, disturbs me and, I believe, disturbs other members of the House.

● (2010)

As I see it, what we are doing today is institutionalizing a cabinet organization structure, but in so doing we are developing a new responsibility for a minister who is already, in my view, overburdened. We are going to burden a minister who has the responsibility for the administration of justice and the responsibility for federal-provincial relations—he is, in fact, the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations—a min-

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ister who is charged with the responsibility of constitutional renewal—with another responsibility which, in my opinion, will make the role of the Minister of National Health and Welfare extremely difficult. It would seem to me to be logical and eminently sensible that the responsibility should be vested in the Minister of National Health and Welfare. She would then be in a position not only to discharge her own responsibilities with regard to social programs in Canada but she would be better able to co-ordinate the social policy programs of the other departments.

Reference was made by my colleague, the member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie), with respect to the relationship of social policy and economic policy. Indeed, you cannot divorce the two. We are talking in the House about doing away with indexing in income tax, for example. That will have a direct impact upon the working poor of the country. When we talk about the relationship of economic policy with social policy, does this mean that the minister of state for social development will operate within the cabinet structure, completely removed from the economic development committee? What will be the relationship between the minister of state and the economic development committee of the cabinet? The minister, in his remarks today, did not touch on that aspect.

It is interesting that the Canadian Council of Social Development, which will be commencing its national meeting in St. John's tomorrow, made reference to this in one of the working papers. It said:

—the objectives, means and consequences of social and economic policies are increasingly intertwined as never before. The need for public policymakers to deal simultaneously with social and economic policies will be a major challenge of the 1980s.

I hope, sir, that we will have somebody from the government side of the House, either the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Weatherhead), or the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Robinson), or perhaps the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) himself, speak on the role and the responsibility that are now about to be assumed by the Minister of Justice, in regard to the co-ordination of the social programs of the government with the economic development programs.

For example, we can think of a number of departments which have an impact on the working poor of Canada, an impact on social programs. Coming as I do from the Atlantic provinces, I can think of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and its ongoing pursuit to end regional disparities in this country. Surely one would expect regional development programs not to operate in isolation from the over-all social development goals of the government. Yet there is no indication of how that kind of co-ordination is to take place.

Of course we can go on to think of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) who, I presume, is a member of the economic development committee of the cabinet. Here is a minister whose programs and policies have a direct impact on social programs, and yet that minister will not be a part of the social development committee, as I understand it.