

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-47, an act to amend the Department of External Affairs Act and to make related amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Hon. John Manley (for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.) moved that Bill C-47, an act to amend the Department of External Affairs Act and to make related amendments to other acts, as amended be concurred in at the report stage.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1535)

[English]

Mr. Manley (for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today in support of Bill C-47, as amended by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the official opposition and the Reform Party for their co-operation in improving the bill by suggesting certain technical changes. This is what I enjoy about Parliament, when parties can work together to improve a bill.

This bill contains housekeeping measures related to the Department of External Affairs Act. As I have previously stated in this Chamber, the government made a commitment to Canadians to change the name of the Department of External Affairs to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

This change in name reflects the accomplishments and independence of Canadian foreign policy since World War II and Canada's maturity from a colony to a dominion, to a sovereign nation. It embraces the contemporary mandate and responsibilities of the department. The changes to the Department of External Affairs Act contained in this bill are not substantive. The bill changes the legal name of the department, titles of the minister and titles of senior officials.

Under this act the Secretary of State for External Affairs will become the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The title of the Minister for International Trade will remain unchanged. The title of a

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junior minister, the Minister of External Relations, will change to become the Minister for International Co-operation.

The official opposition had some concern with that, why have that position if it is not filled? The government would like the flexibility in case there is a need to appoint such a minister in the future.

The titles of senior officials, including the term under-secretary, will reflect the changes made to ministerial titles. For example, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs will become the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The amendments passed by the committee following second reading of Bill C-47 were housekeeping measures as well. Clause 7, for example, was amended at the request of committee members of the official opposition to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the minister as they related to aid and trade. This was done.

Government members sponsored amendments to clauses 18 and 19 of the bill. Clause 18 of the bill was amended due to a technical error in the drafting of the bill. Clause 19 was amended so that it would concur with amendments that have been passed by Parliament to the French version of the Financial Administration Act.

Bill C-47 makes no substantive changes to the structure of the department. Rather, the change in name contained in this legislation reflects the current mandate of the department and the modernity of the Canadian statehood as reflected in the government's response to the special joint committee reviewing foreign policy that was tabled here yesterday in the House by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and also by the Minister for International Trade.

Both of these reports highlight how important foreign policy and this department are to Canadians. At home and abroad the employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade serve and promote the interest and values that Canadians hold dear. Let us join together in congratulating them on many years of excellent service and their continuing commitment to Canada and Canadians.

The Governor General this morning at his installation complimented and praised our peacekeepers and the good they are doing and the positive image they are giving Canada around the world. I would like to take this opportunity to give the same recognition to our foreign service members who work abroad, all of them, whether it be in the external affairs section or international trade, because Canada does have an excellent image. Anywhere you travel around this globe or in speaking to the diplomatic corps here in Ottawa, you will hear nothing but the highest praises for Canada.

• (1540)

We all can take some credit. The people representing Canada around the globe especially deserve a lot of credit for the kind of