

Government Organization Act, 1970

more satisfactory policy in respect of housing so far as the federal government is concerned, and that consequently all Canadians would be able to benefit.

However, I would point out that in this particular debate the issue is not whether our housing policy is satisfactory or not, but whether the government should be so reorganized at this juncture to enable it to establish, hopefully, a more effective housing policy than we now have. If, as the lawyers say, it would help the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants at all, I am prepared to admit that the current policy and housing programs of the government, while good, still could be improved—and one of the purposes of this bill is to seek to do that. Therefore, the hon. member would not usefully occupy the time of the House were he to make a case which we already admit, namely, that further improvements in housing policy in Canada are not only useful but needed.

Mr. Lundrigan: May I ask the minister a question? Is it the intention of the government, after the passage of Bill C-207, in view of his present interest in housing, to remodel this chamber into a number of compartments and rent them, or does he have any more sophisticated plans for the House of Commons after Bill C-207 becomes law?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, my inadequacy in this matter demonstrates in one more way the necessity of getting this bill passed and the ministry of urban affairs and housing established.

Mr. Lundrigan: Would the minister not be satisfied to bring forward a package on urban affairs, with such a bill containing specifically the ministry to be established and all its duties, responsibilities, costs and bureaucratic structure, so that this House—

The Chairman: Order, please. The minister sought the floor on a point of order. The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants already had the floor, and I think little can be gained in committee by continuing the question and answer period.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, the point that I made in my first speech in this debate, which has been made by other members since then, was that this was a very mixed bill, with as many as seven different principles in it, all of which can give rise to confusion. I can be as confused as anybody else in the House, either due to my own natural talents or other people's natural talents, but I do not mind sharing my confusion and perplexities with others.

I said we should have a housing debate because the right hon. Prime Minister, who is the sponsor of the bill, in answer to a question asked by me said that the ministry of urban affairs and housing was one of the ministries of state that would be created. All I am asking is that before anything like that takes place I, and other hon. members on this side of the House, be given a chance to express their views. I see the former mayor of Toronto and other hon. members opposite who should be able to contribute suggestions on what such a new ministry should do.

[Mr. Drury.]

• (9:10 p.m.)

This is the perplexity facing us, Mr. Chairman. If we do not put up a fight now—and I may suggest a solution to the fight—it will be lost entirely. The thing will be heard, there will be a minister, he will be given his terms of reference under the bill and it will be very difficult to change anything. The terms of reference are set forth in clause 15 which provides:

- A proclamation establishing a ministry of state shall
- (a) state the name of the ministry;
 - (b) specify the matter or matters in relation to which the minister for the ministry is to formulate and develop policies; and
 - (c) specify the powers, duties and functions to be assigned to the minister for the ministry in relation to the formulation and development of those policies.

I have been in this House for 12 years—not as long as some other members—and we have had to deal with such things as the creation of new ministries. But on those occasions each of us could say what we thought should or should not be included in the measure, and we could move amendments and make suggestions. In that way our constituents could see what we were doing and could write to us with suggestions that they felt should be advanced. Surely it is participatory democracy when voters can say, "Why don't you put this forward as an idea regarding housing?"

Who can say that the minister, the government, Central Mortgage and Housing or any small number of people have all the wisdom in the world? We know that the former minister in charge of housing, the hon. member for Trinity, went around the country and gathered opinions from thousands of people. Many of these found their way into his report on housing.

This is the dilemma that we find ourselves in on this side of the House, Mr. Chairman, and indeed I think members on the other side are in the same dilemma. The Prime Minister has spoken about the new ministries in relation to science and housing, and the minister who speaks for housing has talked about one based on the Bird Royal Commission on the Status of Women. That is three out of five. Given all that, we have no chance whatsoever to say what we think. Clause 15 says that a proclamation shall specify the matter or matters in relation to which the minister is to formulate and develop policies or the powers, duties and functions to be assigned to the minister.

That is our dilemma, Mr. Chairman. We do not know where we are going when we give these powers. That is what it boils down to. The President of the Treasury Board has the task of piloting this legislation through the House, and I suggest to him that we must have a bridge to all sectors of the House. Some of the new ministries may have to be established in a hurry. If the matter were put before us for debate as early as possible, we could probably agree beforehand on a time limit within which resolutions could be moved, or amendments and suggestions for changes in the powers of a particular ministry. These could be presented to Parliament. Surely a group of people of good will, from all sides, could get together and set limits for the debate within practical terms.