

*Government Organization*

The new Department of Communications to which the Prime Minister referred is, I think, an obviously appropriate step to meet changing conditions and it represents a reasonable concept, although on reading the bill I was surprised at the very narrow definition of the responsibilities of the minister. In view of the roving responsibilities that the minister seems to be discharging today, if he has to stay within the narrow confines of the provisions outlining the duties of his new department he will find himself very severely restricted indeed as to the number of subjects with which he can deal. Certainly the bill leaves the future of the Post Office Department in some uncertainty. Certainly the reorganization of this department is a pretty clear indication of something that the Prime Minister touched upon in closing. He pointed out that it was said by a Roman nearly 2,000 years ago that reorganization per se does not necessarily produce a better service, and we are certainly seeing this today in the Post Office Department. It is a fairly clear indication that reorganization in itself will not necessarily result in improvement.

The Department of Industry has been merged with the Department of Trade and Commerce and has become the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. My recollection is that the Department of Industry was set up a few years ago by a Liberal government with tremendous fanfare and with loud announcements of what it was going to accomplish. People on this side of the house questioned that at the time, criticized the establishment of the new department, said it would involve a waste of money and predicted it would not produce good results and would be a very costly venture. It seems now that there is no disagreement on the subject after a lapse of a few years. It seems to be agreed again that industry should go along with trade and commerce and that this aberration which lasted for a few years should be eliminated. This seems to involve the admission of a substantial error on the part of the government.

The main change in the bill, so far as the effect on the country as a whole is concerned, relates to the new Department of Regional Economic Expansion. I should say in passing that I do not know whether it represents the totality of the government's war against poverty. I am not sure I know what happened to the government's war against poverty except that it seems to have died somewhere along the way. Certainly the poor people have lost

the war so far. But where is the war against poverty? There is nobody in the house, unless I am under a delusion, who believes that a program to attack regional disparity will in itself eliminate poverty in this country because it has been made very clear by the Economic Council of Canada, among others, that there is a great deal of poverty in areas that do not suffer from regional disparity. I must make the point in passing that so far the government has not given any indication of a determination, either by itself or in co-operation with the provinces, to start the war on poverty which was declared by the Liberal government some years back and then abandoned. When we ask about it the Prime Minister is prone to say that he does not have to read the report of the Economic Council of Canada to learn about poverty. I do not think anybody in the house does. I do not claim we first discovered poverty, but the question is: When is the government going to do something about it?

The new department is being established as part of the government's attack on the problem of regional disparity in the country. Dealing with the problem in the country as a whole and not with specific reference to the Atlantic provinces where a special agency has been in operation, I point out that the new department will involve a greater degree of co-ordination of the federal agencies concerned with this question today. I should emphasize that it does not involve anything like complete co-ordination of the activities of the federal government or of the federal agencies concerned in this matter. Virtually every department of the federal government is involved in the problem of regional disparity. The policies of the Department of Finance are obviously important, the policies followed by the Treasury Board in fiscal matters are obviously important, and the policies followed by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) are also obviously important.

I want to emphasize as forcefully as I can that the agencies which are being consolidated in the new department must not be understood to involve anything like an adequate degree of co-ordination if the government is going to make an effective attack on regional disparity. It would be very unfortunate indeed if members of the house or citizens of Canada deduced from what the Prime Minister has said that the new department will in itself provide the necessary degree of co-ordination.