

Establishment of New Departments

would be working in close co-operation with the Department of Justice. I believe that would be useful.

There is one other field in which I think a very careful look ought to be taken, and in respect of which I am not too happy. I understand it is proposed to assign the field of bankruptcy law to a new department or to the registrar general. The weakness in the past of the bankruptcy administration is that there has not been adequate staff; there has not been adequate enforcement and the legislation itself has been totally inadequate. The suggested change does not seem to me to entirely make sense, because the breakdown has been largely in two fields—inadequate enforcement and inadequate legislation. In view of this it does not seem to make sense to say that we will solve the problem by lifting something that is now inadequately enforced out of the field of responsibility of law enforcement generally. It seems to me that this could very properly be left where it is, where it seems to me with an adequately staffed Department of Justice and with adequate legislation it could be properly administered.

• (9:10 p.m.)

Solicitors general in the past seem to have had something of a sinecure. This seems to have resulted from the fact that the responsibility for assigning tasks has not been accepted. No clearcut responsibility was ever assigned to the office of solicitor general.

The proposed changes in the Department of Justice should be carefully reconsidered before we reach a decision, and before we encounter a situation, as was referred to by an earlier speaker during this debate in which we are in danger of tearing away from the first law officer of the crown, the minister of justice, some of the functions that ought to be performed under his supervision. I hope this will be very carefully considered in the light of the legislation to be placed before us.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): May I ask the hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. Brewin: Certainly.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): I should like to ask him on what he based the premise with which he commenced his remarks, that the ministry of justice is overburdened and overworked. Does he not think that in relation to such portfolios as finance, transport, agriculture and national defence, justice is a relatively leisurely portfolio?

Mr. Brewin: No. I simply pointed out that it has not been a leisurely portfolio because there are very great responsibilities which exist in this field. One need only look at some of our ministers of justice to realize that they have been overburdened. They were responsible for advising on all sorts of legal matters. They were responsible for constitutional issues and for law reform. They were responsible to some extent for correctional institutions, and all sorts of other subjects. One need only remember that the present President of the Privy Council when he was minister of justice, and I know the hon. member was not here at that time, was given the burden of being house leader in addition to other responsibilities. He was clearly overburdened.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Perhaps he was overworked as a result of added tasks.

Mr. Brewin: So far as taking responsibility for correctional institutions away from the minister of justice and giving them to the solicitor general is concerned, I think this is a sound move. The minister of justice may well be required to accept responsibility in some of the other fields I have mentioned, such as civil rights, in respect of which an adequate job has not been done in the past.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

Mr. Pickersgill (for Mr. Pearson) thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill No. C-178, respecting the organization of the government of Canada and matters related or incidental thereto.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Speaker, can we obtain some assurance from the minister that the bill will be available tonight?

Mr. Pickersgill: There are some copies available and I will endeavour to see that as many as possible are distributed as soon as possible.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Is there only one bill to be based on this resolution? Surely the government intends to introduce a separate bill for each department?

Mr. Pickersgill: There is only one bill, which has several parts.

• Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.