

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

government is trying to fob off fisheries problems with a bow and a meaningless token. The significance of fisheries to Canada is greater than that.

So, both on the grounds of justice to the fishing industry and in terms of the logic of government organization, I am afraid we will have to go along with the agreement that was reached some time ago by the House leaders, and vote against the amendment.

**Mr. Crouse:** Would the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) permit a question? Would he advise the House what will be the status of the present Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry? As the minister is aware, we have a committee which goes by the name of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry and to which the estimates of the Department of Fisheries and Forestry, which now becomes part of the department of the environment, are sent for scrutiny. This has been the case certainly since I came here in 1957. To what committee will the estimates of the department of the environment be now referred, and what will be that committee's name?

• (4:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Drury:** I regret to say that I cannot answer that question. I do know that standing committees of the House are named and organized on a functional rather than on a departmental-name basis. For example, there is no standing committee on the Treasury Board, yet nevertheless we do not have much trouble in finding a committee, which is prepared to industriously scrutinize the estimates of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Bell:** You aren't kidding!

**Mr. Drury:** How the introduction of a bill creating a new department of government will affect the naming of standing committees is more a question for those who are charged with the organization of the House than for the executive branch.

**Mr. Crouse:** Perhaps I could redirect my question to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis). This is an important point since the duties of committees are to examine and study the estimates of various departments. We understand that in the House of Commons committees are ordered to sit at certain times and estimates are referred to them to be studied and passed, unless the committee system is merely a mockery of the work to be carried out by this House and it is just a ruse and something to be sloughed off by the government to make members of the house of Commons believe that they are important when they are literally like a dog chasing his tail around a tree.

I think this question is important because a very basic change is being made in procedure. I maintain that there is a downgrading of the importance of the fisheries industry, and I hope that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry, who has had an opportunity to consult the President of the Treasury Board, will indicate to the House what the standing of the fisheries and forestry

[Mr. Drury.]

committee will be in the future and to what committee the estimates of the department will be referred.

**Mr. Davis:** My understanding is that the standing committee will continue. However, it is up to the House to decide whether a standing committee is to be replaced by another one. This is not a matter on which I would like to comment at present. As things now stand, the present Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry will continue. I understand that the Special Committee on Environmental Pollution will terminate with this session, so that there will not be a committee on environment control at the beginning of the next session. However, this again is a matter for the House to determine, presumably through the government House leader in consultation with his opposite numbers around the chamber.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I would move that the intervention by the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis), when he was being asked a question, not break the sequence of the speech of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury). The Department of National Revenue has a taxation division and a customs and excise division, each headed by a deputy minister. Following that example one could press the argument, with some justice, that there should be in this new department a deputy minister of the fisheries division. The example is right there in the Department of National Revenue.

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the argument could be pressed, but it is really a measure of what kind of organization is most likely to efficaciously accomplish the general purpose. It is the view of the executive branch that the over-all purpose of the department of the environment, which includes adequately dealing with the problems of fisheries and forestry, can be better achieved by the organization proposed than by the rather more curious and less conventional one suggested on the floor today.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, or under Standing Order 37 (1), to make a brief comment if I may. In the concluding portion of his remarks, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) said the government would have to stand by the agreement reached by the House leaders. I think it should be made clear that the House leaders, and I happen to be one of them, agreed that the bill would be amended to provide that the Minister of the Environment would also be the Minister of Fisheries. There was no agreement on the part of the government to have a deputy minister of fisheries, but it was understood at meetings of the House leaders that from this side of the House we would still press our case on the floor of the House. I would not want the words of the President of the Treasury Board to suggest that somehow we had broken the agreement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. Members:** Question.