

government intrusion or, at least, less "big" government. As I implied earlier, Mr. Speaker, the best answer to this apparent riddle lies in the strengthening of parliamentary institutions and in this context, among other things, in an increase in the number of Members of Parliament acting within the public service to develop policy, and generally to provide a nexus between the people and the public service.

The primary concern should not be that cabinets are too large but rather that too few ministers are charged with so many urgent matters that they have to abdicate the task of policy development, or at least its control, entirely to experts who do not have to be directly responsive to changing popular feelings. It is well to remember that however big a cabinet, all ministers are accountable to Parliament individually. Distribute all the burdens of government across a smaller ministry, and you generalize the grasp that each minister has over his larger area of responsibility—

Mr. Stanfield: Did you say grasp or graft?

Mr. Drury: Grasp.

Mr. Stanfield: I wasn't sure.

Mr. Drury:—and necessarily make more nebulous the substance of his reporting to the House.

One human being endowed with no more than 24 hours in a day can comprehend only so much, and the more you put on his plate the more general his comprehension, and so his accountability of it is likely to be. Thus, it is not a bad thing if we move towards somewhat larger ministries since Parliament benefits from the greater precision that enlargement allows. Particularly is this so in the type of situation that in the past has had to be dealt with by transfers to Departmental Ministers or Ministers without Portfolio, but which in the future will be open to the use of Ministers of State.

Previously, and as things now stand, the undertaking of a special mission of policy development was added to all the other departmental duties a minister might have. Under the Ministries and Ministers of State Act, it will not be necessary to detract from one area of public concern in order to come to grips with another, and hon. members will know the special missions above and beyond a minister's departmental responsibilities that the government has identified, and they will have directly accountable to them the ministers who have been charged with these missions.

It is also in line with the concept of enlarging the interface between those who administer public affairs and Parliament, and particularly this House, that the government proposes Part V of the Government Organization Bill, the amendment of the Parliamentary Secretaries Act. There is clearly a need to provide ministers with assistants in discharging their manifold responsibilities, and nowhere more so than in relation to Parliament. This has been the purpose of our system of Parliamentary Secretaries and it has proven to be beneficial not

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only to ministers but to hon. members in providing them with a continuously available means of access to departmental information and services. The existing provisions of the Parliamentary Secretaries Act are that there cannot be more than 16 parliamentary secretaries appointed to assist ministers at any one time.

It has been many years, however, since the number of ministers with departmental responsibilities has been anywhere near 16, and at the same time the need for parliamentary assistants has enormously increased as a direct consequence of the development of the committee system and other government efforts to enhance the role and authority of Members of Parliament. The Government Organization Bill proposes that there could be as many Parliamentary Secretaries as there are ministers with departmental responsibilities or with major portfolios.

Section 4 of the Salaries Act lists the offices of these ministers, and so the government organization bill provides that the number of Parliamentary Secretaries should not at any one time exceed the number of ministers who hold offices for which salaries are provided in section 4 of the Salaries Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I should now like to turn to Part VI, concerning amendments to the Post Office Act.

In addition to some of the major changes that I have just described, Mr. Speaker, the reform and reorganization of the machinery of government often calls for a certain amount of fine tuning in the light of experience. The House will recall the announcement of the appointment of the hon. member for Longueuil (Mr. Côté) as Minister without Portfolio to assist the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) with his responsibilities for postal matters. The simultaneous and urgent requirement both for reform of the Post Office as well as for the development of major new policies in telecommunications, prompted this move.

The House will also recall that when the Department of Communications was established by the Organization Act in 1969, this act included an amendment to the Post Office Act providing that "the Minister of Communications is the Postmaster General". It continues to be the government's view that mail is an important mode of communication and that postal affairs must always be closely coordinated with other modes of communication. Given the importance and urgency of formulating and implementing new policies for improved telecommunications and improved postal service for all Canadians, it has become imperative that the responsibilities for communications and postal affairs should be evenly shared by two ministers. Hon. members are aware, Mr. Speaker, of the studies being made at this time on the structure of postal and telecommunication services.

Accordingly, Part VI of the Government Organization Bill includes a section to amend the Post Office Act, to provide that the Minister of Communications would be the Postmaster General unless a Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada were appointed to the office of