

Government Organization

what was expected from the Department of Forestry.

We now have six new departments before us, five introduced by way of resolution and one some place in limbo. We will have a chance to hear statements from the prospective ministers some time during the committee stage, but there will be no clear-cut statement in one place outlining the duties of these departments; there will be no debate in one place which will provide the new minister and his staff with readily accessible terms of reference for running the department. Therefore at the outset I would express disappointment that this traditional concept was not followed and that therefore we find ourselves in this doubtful situation.

The second reason for my being disappointed, and I might say alarmed, was the speech of the Prime Minister today. As I said, Mr. Speaker, some of us hoped when the announcement of the reorganization was made last December that we were going to see an end to the chaos and confusion that has characterized this government since 1963. We thought there would now be some hard thinking and direction which would enable ministers to make coherent plans of action in order to get at the problems that face this country today, which have been with us for many years and will probably be with us for many years to come.

We expected from our government at least some form of co-ordinated attack on these problems and this, I am afraid to say, is not the case when one considers the Prime Minister's speech. He dealt primarily with two sets of departments, those dealing with justice and the split-up of the Department of Justice into three component parts, and then with Indian affairs and northern development and its responsibilities as opposed to the delineation of responsibilities of energy, mines and resources. Then the Prime Minister mentioned that under the Privy Council we were to have the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) speak for Treasury Board and answer general questions concerning policy, if I understood his statement correctly.

Mr. Benson: Under the Privy Council?

Mr. Hamilton: I will repeat what I understood the Prime Minister to say, that matters relating to Treasury Board and general questions relating to the over-all conduct of government would be answered in the house by the Minister of National Revenue, and I

[Mr. Hamilton.]

assumed that general matters affecting the government would be those which come under the direction of the Privy Council. At the end of the Prime Minister's speech I asked who was going to speak for the secretariat of the Privy Council dealing with scientific matters. On May 5 in this house I asked the same sort of question of another member of the government. I pointed out to him that the history of science over the last 20 years in Canada affected several departments of government and that naturally the reporting of these matters to the house fell within the responsibility of the Privy Council because several departments were concerned. I pointed out that Prime Ministers were so busy that they did not have time to give the push to the scientific work of all these departments, and consequently it suffered.

As a matter of fact, under the National Research Council Act the council takes its direction from a committee of cabinet which refers items to it for action and decision. If the committee of cabinet does not meet for seven years, as was the case once in the last 20 years, you can see that the National Research Council has to carry out its work without the direction of the committee of cabinet. Then a new government comes in, gets all excited and intends to deal with this question of science and a new impetus is given to this subject. Then when the routine starts, because there is no one at whom the finger of the house can be pointed, the matter drifts off into apathy once again. The Prime Minister's answer today indicated that he would still be charged with reporting to the house on scientific matters, which means a continuation of the situation which has existed in regard to science for the last 20 years. We have been unable to get leadership and direction in this regard.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I was not only disappointed at the way the Prime Minister handled this matter on second reading, but I was frightened because it means that the confusion and chaos of the last three years will not be ended. There is still no leadership; there is still no way of co-ordinating not only the question of the scientific council, and Treasury Board, which matter is now being looked after by the Minister of National Revenue, but there are important matters concerning consumers all across Canada. Members of all parties in the house have expressed concern in this regard. No one can be held responsible in this house, so there is