

*Government Organization*

I am not sure that I agree that the cabinet in its present form is too large. The numbers have been increasing over the years as government business has been increasing and we have now a membership of 26. My own feeling is, and I believe the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) shares this feeling, that as government business continues to increase, and there is no reason to believe that it will not do so in years ahead, it may be necessary to increase the number of ministers to deal with problems which cannot now be dealt with as effectively as they should because the ministers concerned already have too much to do. As the number of ministers for that purpose may increase, and the right hon. gentleman mentioned this, it will perhaps become necessary to introduce a system into our governmental structure by which we will have ministers in the cabinet and ministers who only attend cabinet meetings when subjects of direct responsibility and interest to them are being considered. This is not to suggest an inner cabinet within a cabinet, although that has developed almost automatically in perhaps a not too effective way. There are difficulties inherent to that kind of informal development.

This would mean that the cabinet itself would be smaller and that there would be a number of ministers who would not automatically be members of the cabinet but as Privy Councillors they could be summoned to cabinet meetings when matters of direct interest and importance to their departments were being considered. That is a practice which is now customary at Westminster.

During the May 9 discussion preceding the introduction of the bill the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton) suggested that it would be helpful in dealing with this legislation for each of the ministers concerned and affected to take part in the debate and in turn deal with that part of the legislation which directly affects his or her responsibility. It is the government's intention to follow that procedure. The ministers who are concerned with this reorganization will be present to make statements and answer questions in respect of those matters which have been or are now being transferred to their responsibility. It may be that this could be done during second reading, but it may be found that it would be more effective to do it at the committee stage when the bill will be considered section by section, because each section will deal with particular ministerial responsibilities and the appropriate minister

could handle that section. That will be for the house to decide.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister a question regarding the matter he dealt with in the penultimate paragraph of his remarks. I suggested that acceptance of this bill would mean an increase in the number of members of the cabinet. If I understood the Prime Minister correctly, he said a few minutes ago that there would be no increase in the membership of the cabinet at the present time. Do those words indicate that the result of this legislation would be that the number of ministers could increase although that is not the government's intention at the present time?

**Mr. Pearson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the number could increase but such an increase is not contemplated by the government in this legislation. Perhaps I will be able to deal with that matter in detail or, if not in detail, at least mention how the cabinet will be organized if and when this legislation is adopted. Perhaps I should mention at once that there is a minister without portfolio who could be transferred to a new department of government if such were established. There are also other ways of dealing with this legislation which would not result in any increase, and I will make this clear as I go on.

In addition to the additional responsibility of ministers which will be discussed in this debate, there are certain general matters arising from the bill itself which are common to a number of departments. These matters relate to government organization generally, and I propose that the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) will speak for the government as well as for his department in this regard, because he will be the minister responsible for the Treasury Board as well as for the Department of National Revenue. As the minister of the Treasury Board, in addition to his present functions he will have charge of matters of government organization, and I think this makes it appropriate for him to take charge of general questions as they arise during the course of the debate.

There are certain other aspects of the legislation, however, which I should like to deal with briefly as Prime Minister, and these are the ones relating to the authority of ministers in closely related fields of jurisdiction. While the exposition of the details of particular departmental jurisdiction during the course of this debate will no doubt be of principal interest to members, certain remarks