

perfectly prepared to attempt to debate the bill on the principle which the President of the Treasury Board enunciated on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). The President of the Treasury Board said that the bill, if enacted, will better equip the government to develop and implement new policies to serve Canadians in a variety of ways, among them the fight against pollution.

He went on to outline his concept of the need for greater flexibility and manoeuvrability within the operations of the federal government. But he also made what to me is a most astounding observation, namely, that the bill would increase the accountability of the executive to Parliament. I find that a very strange statement from the President of the Treasury Board. I find it to be very strange reasoning. I attempted to look carefully through the bill's various aspects and phases, with its references to various changes to various pieces of legislation, and I fail to understand how it does anything but the opposite of increasing the accountability of the executive to Parliament. At the very least, it does not change the situation from the one we now have.

The Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis), in his speech which he termed wide-ranging—to which I may refer later—again illustrated very well the futility of this exercise, because he delivered what my colleague, the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland), called a motherhood-type speech. It would have been a very good speech, made in the right place at the right time. To those of us who have been following some of the speeches the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has made in various parts of the country, and in particular in the coastal areas of B.C., much of it had a familiar ring. In other words, in a debate which, according to the title of the bill, concerns itself with government organization, the minister made a speech which might very well be right and proper on a public platform seeking to arouse the Canadian public to the dangers of pollution, but it had nothing to do with giving the House an inkling of how he understands the responsibility which he has been asked to assume as the minister of a new and enlarged department.

So I think that if the debate is to have any meaning at all, it has to revert to the question of whether or not it is desirable for the House to have this kind of bill thrust before it at almost every session. In some remarks that I drafted earlier today, which I was sending to my constituents, I described the situation in these terms. I raised the question: Is Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau merely a technocrat intent on shuffling round the building blocks of the various structures within the organization of the government of Canada like some child learning his ABCs from a new Christmas gift, or is he a master strategist moving purposefully toward a new era of effective government, attuned to the needs of the latter part of the twentieth century?

This, I suggested, is the substance of the debate which is rapidly gathering momentum in Parliament. Then I went on to say, as did the President of the Treasury Board in his speech, that pretty well every year since 1966 we have been presented with these bills having to

Government Organization Act, 1970

do with government organization—omnibus types of bills. Perhaps in 1966 those of us who were around did not really sense that this was the beginning of a large cloud which was looming low on the horizon. Perhaps we were not aware what was really happening, of the trend and direction in which the government was moving in connection with proposals to change the operations of the federal government.

The fact is that one of the side-results of this form of legislation is that year by year it is becoming more and more difficult to keep track of the legislation we have, because many important aspects of legislation are being buried inside these mammoth government bills, which do not only deal with the restructuring of federal government departments, as other speakers have said. So I think it is time some of the facts of our current situation were brought forward in this debate.

• (9:50 p.m.)

What is the present situation with respect to the authority of the government to move in restructuring or streamlining the activities of the federal government, and why do I suggest this situation is making a farce of parliamentary democracy and parliamentary debate? Let us consider the question of the proposed new department of the environment. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, what is the point in our sitting here tonight debating the feasibility or otherwise of the establishment of a department of the environment when we are already faced with a *fait accompli* in everything but name? It makes me think of that old and well-worn saying that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

What added powers and responsibilities is the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry getting under this bill just because it is proposed to change the name of that department? I submit that there are absolutely none. I have gone over the Order in Council that was passed on November 26, 1970, P. C. 1970-2047, and I have looked at the powers and duties that were then added to the responsibilities of the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry under the authority of the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act. As far as I have been able to check, there is not one item or aspect of this bill that is not already covered by that Order in Council so far as the responsibilities and duties of the minister are concerned.

Some of us, of course, recognize that the responsibilities of the President of the Treasury Board lie in the allocation of funds and that he is just acting on behalf of the Prime Minister in this debate. But when introducing this measure, when he referred to the new department of the environment he gave no indication that the minister would have any further back-up or muscle to do anything about improving our environment. So really all we are indulging in is an exercise of rubber-stamping something the government has already done. Even if we were to defeat this bill, the authority the government has already exercised under the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act would not be affected in any way. So, Mr. Speaker, we come back to the question: Is this bill just a matter of technocratic juggling?