

*Corporate and Consumer Affairs*

corporate and consumer affairs in order to achieve a common direction of policy wherever this is feasible. We intend to apply the most modern concepts in management available to us and to introduce the most up to date budgeting and program analysis. We have this opportunity. This will require a study of the costs and benefits of the programs that we inaugurate and implement. From time to time we will be seeking both internal, within the government service, and external, outside the government service, advice on these subjects.

● (9:40 p.m.)

Now, most of the functions of the consumer branch are set out in clause 6 of the bill. I am only going to deal with this clause in a general manner under the rules, Mr. Speaker, knowing a later opportunity will be given to me at the committee stage to deal with it in more detail. Clause 6(1)(a) indicates that the minister shall:

(a) initiate, recommend or undertake programs designed to promote the interests of the Canadian consumer.

This provision implements the recommendation of the joint committee of the house and Senate as found on pages 3451 and 3452 of their report. Then, 6(1)(b) refers to co-ordinating programs of the government of Canada that are designed to promote the interests of the Canadian consumer. This recommendation flows directly from the interim report of the Economic Council of Canada, page 20. I need not recite the appropriate words in the report because they are available to all members.

Then, clause 6(1)(c) refers to promoting and encouraging the institution of practices or conduct tending to the better protection of the Canadian consumer and co-operation with provincial governments or agencies, bodies or persons in any programs having similar objects. This provision flows from the recommendation found in the interim report of the Economic Council of Canada, pages 27 and 28, under the heading, "Federal-provincial co-operation and private activities". I think hon. members will be able to trace those recommendations through into the language of the bill.

Clauses 6(1)(d) provides that the department will have responsibility for undertaking, recommending or assisting in programs to assist the Canadian consumer to be more fully informed about goods and services offered to the consumer. This factor was conceded to be paramount by the Economic Council of Canada, as will be found by a reference to its

[Mr. Turner.]

report, pages 20 and 21 under the heading "Information and research". There was a recommendation on this point as well by the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons as found at page 3453 of their report.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, section 6(2) gives the department responsibility for undertaking research for the purpose of carrying out its duties and functions, not only those related to this section but also the other powers which are listed in clause 5. This provision flows from the recommendation appearing on page 21 of the interim report of the Economic Council of Canada.

I have recited these references only to indicate that, as best we can, we have attempted to implement in this legislation being submitted to the house those recommendations of the joint committee of the parliament of Canada and of the body set up by parliament to give interim and long term advice to the government, the Economic Council of Canada. I want to say that the Economic Council indicated one of the main impressions it received was that government programs relating to consumer affairs lacked any effective means of insuring co-ordination of the administration of those programs. This sometimes resulted in no one taking responsibility for a program or, what was even worse, more than one department carrying out similar programs.

A striking example of the duplication of programs exists, as the council illustrated, in the inspection of retail stores. These stores are subject to inspection by a number of different government agencies. I feel a consolidation of these inspection services would be a more efficient alternative than having several government inspectors go through stores or warehouses at various times. This would get the job done more cheaply and more effectively.

As I said at the resolution stage, we are not making any pre-judgment of the eventual locus of the administration of the various spheres of consumer interest within the federal government. We have set up an inter-departmental committee at the highest official level embracing those departments currently having certain responsibilities for consumers. When these programs in the various departments of the federal government are analysed, we will be in a better position to make a more rational judgment as to where and how they ought to be administered.