

I would like to have this bill given a six months hoist. I am sure that at the end of that time the minister, the government and members of this House will have received more information, letters and representations to the effect that this piece of legislation is not necessary at this time.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): I think the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) in presenting his amendment provided a very valuable and useful service because his amendment to give the bill a six months hoist has served to focus the attention of the country on the legislation perhaps in a very dramatic way. Certainly if the hon. member had not moved his amendment, the bill could have gone through all stages in the House without receiving the attention which, in my view, it so justly deserves.

I want to endorse, and indeed to reiterate, the sentiments of my colleague who has just taken his seat because I, too, am a little confused as to the reason the government brought in this legislation at this time. Perhaps the minister, in his usual affable and friendly manner, will enlighten us as to exactly what the thinking and strategy is behind his legislation. Certainly, he would be the last minister in the government whom we would expect to espouse the "Big Brother" theory of government which, in my view, this bill represents. This bill suggests that only the government is capable of providing an adequate system of standards in the country. That is the inference I take from the bill and that is indeed the only conclusion to which we can come for introducing the bill in the first instance. We have in this country, and have had for a number of years, the Canadian Standards Association. This body has been providing this service and, I think, even the minister would be prepared to concede it has carried out a very successful and useful function. It has been carrying out this function in a peculiarly Canadian way, without domination by government but with its participation. Indeed, there has been participation by industry and by all levels of government.

The Canadian Standards Association is a non-profit organization that has no shareholders. It enjoys the privileges of a federal charter. It has more than 3,000 members, comprised of government, industry and consumer groups. The standards are drafted by committees which only arrive at a consensus after long and careful study, and it is generally

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agreed by all across the country that the CSA has more than fulfilled its purpose.

So, we come back to the question: why does the government find it necessary to interfere at this time? What will be the position of the provinces and the municipalities which up to this point have participated in, and have formed a useful part of, the Canadian Standards Association if the government has its way and if it successfully gets Bill C-163 through Parliament? Has there been agreement with the provinces and municipalities? Have these governments indicated their dissatisfaction with the present arrangement? This may be true.

This is an area in which the minister hopefully will take the House into his confidence and enlighten us, because certainly we want to know why this legislation is necessary. Does the minister feel that this type of government action is necessary to prepare ourselves for Britain's ultimate entry into the Common Market and to deal with the governmental standards organizations of Europe? Perhaps that might be the reason. If so, I think it can be usefully argued that the Canadian Standards Association can, for purposes of our dealings with the Common Market countries or other countries in the world, function in the same way as a government body because, as I said, up to this date the government of Canada has participated fully in this organization.

● (3:40 p.m.)

The minister said the following in his press release:

The Council would be based on the principle of co-operation between all interested groups—manufacturers, commercial interests, service industries, government, consumers. It would speak for all Canadians. The Council will be independent of government in its policies and operation but it will be accountable to Parliament for the expenditure of public funds.

That is government jargon. It is just the government's way of saying, "We are going to control the standards of this country and this is our way of doing so." I ask, has it been necessary? Have there been complaints from the groups mentioned in the press release which make it necessary for the government to take this action? If there have been, then I suggest the minister certainly has a responsibility to tell us, because all of the reasons outlined in the minister's press release of March 12, 1970 can be cited in support of the argument that the government should withdraw this legislation and continue to co-operate with the Canadian Standards Association.