

Establishment of New Departments

I want to conclude by saying I support generally the proposal of the government, which I believe is heading in the right direction. I deplore the fact that no time has been set for a continuation of the same type of work to give us more reforms.

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, we now have before us a rather meaty piece of legislation, since it provides for the establishment of a department of the solicitor general, a department of manpower, a department of the registrar general, a department of Indian affairs and northern development, department of energy, mines and resources, for the establishment of the office of president of the Treasury Board and provides finally for such other consequential or incidental statutory amendments as are necessary to implement the changes to be effected by the said measure.

Mr. Chairman, this is quite substantial for a single piece of legislation and we do not have time, in the few minutes at our disposal to analyse in detail all the new trends brought about within the federal administration.

• (7:10 p.m.)

At the outset, I want to point out that the suggestion made a while ago by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell), was justified, because it would be important not to act quickly with regard to that measure but to allow parliament, through a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate, to study all its possible changes.

Tonight, however, Mr. Chairman,—I reserve the right to speak when the bills are introduced for each of the objectives of that resolution—I want to deal mainly with the proposed creation of a department of manpower, subject of capital importance in Canada because it must allow us to approach effectively the country's major economic problems.

We know that a great effort must be made to develop our production capacity, whether in the field of productivity, manpower qualification, training or mobility. Economic and social problems change very rapidly. It is urgent that the governments of our country co-operate to our economic growth and the qualification of our labour force.

For some years now—not only here in Canada but in every country—the repercussions of that phenomenon called automation have been felt in various areas, namely unemployment, manpower displacement

[Mr. Mather.]

training of workers, financial help to workers and today, there is talk of the need for a department of manpower.

But, before giving our blessing to the creation of that new department, it would be important to know, and we will know it only when the bill is introduced, what responsibilities exactly that new department will assume in the field of federal jurisdiction and probably with regard to the provincial jurisdiction. Besides, the question has been raised sharply and is already quite controversial.

We have, on one side, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) who has been saying for some months that to be effective the manpower policy must be carried out at the national level. His argument is based on the fact that the central government is responsible for the economic life of Canada and that, since manpower is an essential element, the central government must be able to establish itself an effective national policy.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration does not object at times, in the speeches he makes outside this house, to the provinces administering their own problems of reclassification of manpower. Outside the house, and sometimes in the house, in answer to questions, he repeated the same assertion to the effect that he would not object to the provinces administering their reclassification of manpower, except on two points: the employment office and the financing of a manpower policy.

On the other hand, Mr. Chairman, we have the opposite attitude, controverted by the premier of Quebec who, in Sherbrooke, on May 2 last, stated:

Action in this field, to be efficient, should come under the government closer the people. This government, said Mr. Lesage, is the government of Quebec. This is a field of provincial jurisdiction, considering its close relationship to education, and the connections of such a policy with area development, social security, schools, educational establishments.

If Quebec did not want to do anything in that respect, said the premier, it would be difficult to blame the federal government. The latter, however, would hardly be able to adapt its means of action to the concrete needs of the people of various areas in the province of Quebec.

The Quebec minister of labour, who comes from Sherbrooke, has also been asserting for some months, in various speeches, and this is probably the reflection of the attitude he had to take when he met the responsible minister in Ottawa at the end of 1965 or at the