

Government Organization

the council has been subject to ministerial supervision. This bill will accord the council an independent status similar to that of the Economic Council of Canada. Like the Economic Council, it will become a separate employer and will have the right to publish its own reports.

In one case the bill grants additional powers and responsibilities to an existing department which complement those which it presently exercises. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs was set up during the last session of parliament to provide a focal point for the protection of consumer interests. As we are all consumers, the department's activities have aroused a great deal of interest and support both in Canada and in other countries. The provisions of this bill will enlarge and strengthen the department's role by assigning to it a number of regulatory activities, designed to protect the consumer, which are presently carried on by other departments. These include the prevention of fraud and misrepresentation in advertising and packaging, and the maintenance of standards of safety and quality in food and drugs. The inspectors designated by the minister under the provisions of this bill will ensure that these standards are maintained in retail outlets. This will provide more effective protection for the Canadian consumer.

[Translation]

The main purpose of some other amendments in the legislation is to increase governmental efficiency while at the same time reducing administrative costs. The most significant suggestion in that regard concerns the establishment of a Department of Supply and Services. The Glassco Commission had recommended the grouping, within a single department, of common services such as purchasing and supply, in a way that such a concentration would be advantageous. Only in the volume of the operations involved, the government can make substantial savings. It also happens that experts with much diversified knowledge will be brought together and will, therefore, combine their abilities. In the last few years, following the recommendation of the Glassco Commission, the purchasing services have been systematically organized within the Department of Defence Production. The proposed department will be responsible for procurements as well as for other administrative services.

That will enable us to enforce the supplementary recommendations of the Glassco

Commission and to provide most of the common services needed by the various government departments.

[English]

In two cases the bill provides for the consolidation of two existing departments or of an existing department with a branch of another existing department. The Department of Industry will be merged with the Department of Trade and Commerce, and the forestry branch of the Department of Forestry and Rural Development will be transferred to the Department of Fisheries. In both cases the objectives of the component parts and the services provided by them are similar in nature or complementary. The new departments, therefore, will be able to provide a wider range of co-ordinated programs while achieving substantial administrative savings.

I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the over-all effect of the many changes proposed by the bill is not to increase the number of governmental departments. Although the bill creates five new departments, it consolidates or abolishes five existing departments. So the total number of departments remains unchanged. Despite the length and complexity of the bill's provisions, our purpose has not been to make the government itself larger or more unwieldy but to eliminate duplication, to simplify administrative structures and to provide better service to Canadians.

I want to add only that we are doing all this in order to keep up with the changing times. I know that there has always been objection over the years to various forms of change or reorganization. I thought that as a matter of co-operation and dialogue with some of those who might object to the provisions of the bill I would supply them with a very good quotation which, for obvious reasons, I cannot use myself. But it might be worth reading. It is a statement by a certain Roman gentleman of 2,000 years ago who, talking of this process of reorganization, said:

We trained hard—but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn that later in life we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau:

—while producing confusion—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.