

Supply—Consumer and Corporate Affairs

policy of the government. This department does not have any special weapon with which to attack the cost of living. The board of review suggested by the Prime Minister would relate to an examination of charges, prices and costs generally. The constitutional power of enforcement does not lie directly with the federal government, and this is one reason we are contacting the provincial governments at this time for their co-operation.

• (5:10 p.m.)

I do not want to comment generally on the economic policy of the government except in so far as it relates to my particular responsibilities as minister. I do not need to comment now on what my good friend the hon. member for Peace River asked about combines, because I feel I have already dealt quite thoroughly with that subject. The hon. member for Kootenay West asked what I was going to do by way of sponsoring public information for the consumer. I agree with him that one of the chief functions of this department when we get the resources from parliament—and I realize and accept the restriction on spending at this moment—will be in the role of research, public education and information. We now have in the department a consumer information section. We hope eventually to see what we can do within the federal jurisdiction to contribute to consumer counselling.

We look forward to seeing what we can do in co-operation with the media of the printed word, television and radio to help inform the Canadian consumer. As a matter of fact we have already received co-operation from many professional broadcasters, television people and those responsible for consumer columns and consumer pages in Canadian newspapers. They have already given us a great deal of help.

Mr. Herridge: Excellent.

Mr. Turner: I hope that within the next two or three weeks we will have ready a booklet of information for the consumer showing the average Canadian housewife where to write if she has a consumer complaint which needs remedying, action or information. That booklet should be published very shortly. I hope that for the moment the hon. member for Kootenay West will bear with me on this progress report.

The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich asked what I am going to do about misleading advertising. He will observe that the proposed amendment of the Criminal Code

[Mr. Turner.]

involves the transfer of section 306 of the Criminal Code, which relates to misleading advertising alongside section 33C of the Combines Investigation Act. The substance of this transfer is that instead of allowing the enforcement of this section relating to misleading advertising to rest in the hands of the provincial attorneys general, we intend to bring it back to the federal Department of Justice for crown prosecutions. I hope this will result in a more uniform enforcement of the statute.

There has been considerable case law or jurisprudence built up on those two sections. I hope that in the next review of the Criminal Code we may have more fundamental revisions to that particular section. I also refer members of the committee to the annual report of the Director of Investigation and Research, which sets out the important judicial decisions in respect of section 33C.

The hon. member for Timiskaming asked what our priorities were in the department, particularly as they relate to the consumer interest. First, we are undertaking a general review of the entire federal consumer program and the legislation enforcing it. I remember that when we were discussing the nature of the department last fall I was able to say to hon. members that the statute setting up the department was an enabling statute giving us initiating, co-ordinating and policy powers. The first step, surely, is to find out just where and how the consumer program is administered by the various federal departments and agencies and the inter-departmental committee which is now in operation under the chairmanship of my deputy minister. So the first thing is a review of the administration of and the legislation behind the present program. We have set up an information service which I have already described. We have set up a research bureau. We consider that misleading advertising is an immediate priority and we intend to enforce that section. The problem of labelling and packaging is receiving active consideration, particularly those recommendations that were made by the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons.

Also, as I have said publicly, I am reviewing the constitutional position of the federal government with respect to bilingual labelling. If we admit that every consumer is entitled to know exactly what she is buying, she is also entitled to understand the language on the label. There are certain constitutional