

Standards Council of Canada

matter of fact, the meetings which the government and the CSA call for in the initial stages imply a very small co-ordinating group. I do not say it will be the Canada Council of Standards, but just as one would not have the Canada Council go out and put on a piccolo concert I do not think you will find the Standards Council of Canada doing the job of the private sector and the voluntary agencies unless it should become absolutely essential, in which case it has a basic responsibility. The work cannot be left altogether to the market place. We are deluding ourselves if we think we live in a completely free economy. I should not say "free". We live in a free society, I suggest. I meant a completely free market.

There are many factors at work, particularly internationally, which are affecting us, all with their good intentions and all with their own viewpoint. None of us is without a bias or without a viewpoint. This is perfectly legitimate. But I think the people from the private sector who are objecting to these proposals are afraid of something which I do not think stands a chance of happening. I am a member of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, of the Canadian Manufacturers Association and of other groups including the Society of the Plastic Industry, all of which, I believe, are concerned. These are the very people who will be involved. They will not only be doing the work themselves but they will be reaping the benefits themselves, as will all Canadians. I agree we must be terribly careful that we do not reach down and spoil the good job that these people are doing. Nevertheless, I think there really is a need for a co-ordinating body. I think someone called it a super council. I do not like that word; it sounds like a commissar of standards and I do not think we function that way in this country.

The problem about some of these criticisms is that we speak as though we were not Canadians. You know, we have always had a system, our Parliamentary system, under which with a Prime Minister and a majority government we could have the worst dictatorship in the world. Yet somehow we have not.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):
No?

Mr. Danson: Well, not yet. I think Canadians will fight this at all costs. We just would not allow it to happen. If there were even the slightest hint of that from the front benches—and there is no indication of it—the people on

the back benches would not stand for it because I think basically we are a free and democratic society, so this will not happen. With all the checks and balances the other systems have, I do not think any have any more responsibility than we have. Maybe there are some which have what might be considered a degree more efficiency but I would not trade that efficiency for the choice I have, and in any case I very much question that efficiency as well.

This reflects itself in the quality of life. I think I was saying in the debate yesterday that we have the second highest standard of living in the world. Some people say it is the third highest because Sweden has a technically higher standard of living. I respect the Swedes. They are a great people and Sweden is a magnificent country. But I do not think I would change our standard of living for theirs, nor would I change our standard of living for that of the country which is supposed to have the world's highest standard of living. These are not things that make a country great. The thing that makes us great is that we are Canadians, and we make ourselves great in our own special way, not any better than other people but just in our own way.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I have digressed into an area of philosophy that perhaps I should not get into when talking on the subject of standards, but the standards we are talking of are Canadian standards. This is Canadian legislation and we will respond to it and co-operate with it as Canadians. This means we will not be extreme unless some of our friends get into the matter too deeply, though I do not think this is likely.

In view of the affection with which the minister responsible for the bill is held in this House, I think that the terms of reference here will be eminently fair. I look forward to a great role for industry, for business and for the consumer as a result of a first class job done by the private agencies in this country, co-ordinated with, and inspired and assisted by, the Standards Council of Canada.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, first I wish to express my gratitude to some hon. members who have participated in this discussion, namely, the hon. members for Gander-Twillingate, Wellington, St. John's East