

Supply—Privy Council

be taken other than through that council. This would require the appointment of ladies and gentlemen who would not be attracted by whatever expense allowances were made or by whatever monetary remuneration was provided, the appointment of persons who would be really interested in performing their duties for the advancement of these cultural activities in the Canadian nation.

Mr. Green: In effect, then, the council would have quite wide executive powers?

Mr. St. Laurent: Evidently, if I am right, and I think I am right, it would require legislation and parliament would determine to what extent the council would have these executive powers. If I were still to have any responsibility in public affairs I would prefer that the council should have the power of decision and that it should not be subject to any kind of control or interference that some people might find undesirable.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Chairman, I am so sympathetic with the motive behind setting up a council or at any rate seeing that something is done in the words of the report to try to come to the rescue of the humanities and social sciences—and I think that was one of the chief objectives—that I certainly do not wish to utter a single word that sounds unsympathetic. Nevertheless I find a question in my mind as to just what kind of body we are setting up, or at any rate, what kind of body is contemplated in the report.

I understood the Prime Minister to say before we rose for dinner, and I think it is implied in what he said a moment ago, that those who would serve on the Canada council would be doing so because of their interest in the matter and not as officials. However, on looking at the report, although the report is not necessarily to be adopted word for word, I find at page 370 that the chairman and the vice-chairman are to be full-time appointments.

Mr. St. Laurent: Yes.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): That, of course, in itself is not necessarily objectionable. It does however raise in my mind the question whether or not we are setting up a new department of government which very naturally will want to show results in what it does. I notice, for example, the report says at the bottom of page 377:

We should also consider it a misfortune if this Canada council became in any sense a department of government, but we realize that since this body will be spending public money it must be in an effective manner responsible to the government and hence to parliament.

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

Another quotation I should like to read from the report is found on page 378, and is as follows:

We do not think it advisable that officers of the federal government sit as members of the proposed council; but in its deliberations it would undoubtedly need the expert advice of many departments of government.

Then on page 379 it says:

We therefore recommend:

d. That the Canada council have the authority to invite to its sessions officers of departments and agencies of the government, including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the national film board, and that it give consideration to the appointment of advisory committees in the principal fields with which it will be concerned.

I find myself just a little troubled with the proposal for this rather elaborate machinery, as to whether we may find that we have really set up something which, in order to justify its existence and the money spent on it, will have to show great activity. I find myself a little troubled as to whether we will find that educational authorities and those in the pursuit of the arts may find that they have something here which may become almost more than ever contemplated, and which may end up by assuming a position which I would rather imagine at the present time none of us intend that it should.

I just come back to this. You have a full-time chairman, president and committee, and there are going to be government departments called in. I think we are going to have, in fact, a rather important new department of government, whether or not we really intend to.

Mr. St. Laurent: I discussed the terms of the report with more than one gentleman whom I was feeling out as to the possibility of having him serve on this council, and one of them felt that there was no requirement, at least at this time, for a full-time chairman as suggested in the report. We already have the national research council which has been doing very valuable work in its field. We have, and we are going to consider the estimates for it, the federal district commission. I think they have been able to operate in a manner that has been generally satisfactory.

Of course at this time we are not discussing exactly what the set-up and powers of the Canada council would be. I was merely replying to a question by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra as to what I had in my mind as preliminary thoughts as to the kind of legislation that could be recommended to parliament. I think we will all agree that we would like the kind of council that would operate in the manner that is characteristic of the national research council,