



Bulletin

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A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF STANDARDS

The following excerpts are from an address by Mr. C.M. Drury, Minister of Industry, at a meeting on February 27 of federal officials and representatives of the ten provinces:

...Standards are the language of production — they describe ways of making things, using things, or doing things. They are the means by which the needs of the user are expressed. They are also the means by which the design or performance of products offered for sale is specified, enabling the customer to select that which best suits his individual requirements and offers maximum cost-effectiveness for his particular application....

PUBLIC INTEREST

In the past, governments have only become directly involved in the formulation or enforcement of general standards, where the public interest is concerned or for the purpose of procuring goods or services for which the Government is a customer. The public interest embraces such matters as public health (e.g. the purity and quality of foods and drugs), public safety (e.g. the airworthiness of commercial transport aircraft, the construction of electrical appliances, the use of explosive or radioactive materials, etc.), and the protection of the public against fraud or misrepresentation (e.g. weights and measures, false labelling, etc.) Standards designed to protect the public interest are embodied in legislation and hence are known as mandatory standards which are enforced by law.

There are, however, other aspects of public interest which modern governments are called upon to protect. Most important of these is the matter of con-

sumer interest which is relatively inarticulate and which is not always adequately served by marked forces alone. Commensurate with the increasing responsibility of governments for the economic well-being of the modern industrial state, they have accepted the task of providing for the institutions or services needed to ensure the efficiency of domestic industry and to promote external trade.

...It seems to me that we should try to ensure that in Canada we have a comprehensive and effective system of industrial standards and one which is truly representative of the interests of all sectors of our economic community.

Although much useful standards work has been accomplished over the years in both the private sector (notably by the Canadian Standards Association), and in the public sector (by the Canadian Government Specifications Board), I think it must be admitted that we do not at present have an adequate national system of standards. In particular, we suffer from fragmentation of effort coupled with a general lack of co-ordination, an inadequate level of overall effort leading to excessive delays in the promulgation of needed standards, and the neglect of important areas where standardization would be highly desirable, if not essential.