

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) some time ago about the Economic Council of Canada. This is one of the most important and valuable groups giving attention to the state of our national economic health. Its reports and studies are illuminating and immensely useful. If this organization had done nothing more than produce its very fine study of the Atlantic region economy a few years ago, the nation's esteem would have been assured.

Just as it is essential that we have the office of the Auditor General to scrutinize the administrative side of government, so a body like the Economic Council is valuable in the realm of governmental policy consideration. To have a competent representative group look at the economy of the country should be immensely valuable to any government, not just to one apparently and pathetically so much in need of economic advice as this one. I was therefore much concerned to learn weeks ago that the austerity wave was to wash over this vital body and, by curtailing the scope of its operations in reference to staff and outside consultants, to diminish its effectiveness. The same thing was intended for the Auditor General, apparently, but some reprieve was given him.

● (10:00 p.m.)

It is not immediately clear from the answers given so far what is being done in reference to the Economic Council. The replies of the President of the Treasury Board have been elusively evasive. Whether the wrath of the government was kindled by reported differences of opinion or emphasis between the government and the council on certain alleged anti-inflation measures, I cannot say. But I can say it is now apparent that the austerity program is a selective one. Loyal, long-time civil servants may be given the axe or the redundancy notice, to use an euphemism. Diplomatic posts may be closed even in areas of the Caribbean where the need for more attention rather than less is becoming painfully apparent. The National Film Board may have to diminish its role. But the cut-backs and the freezes are not universally applied. As George Orwell might put it, in the path of the Treasury Board all departments and branches are equal, but some are more equal than others.

The Prime Minister's administrative and bureaucratic empire reaches proportions which make his predecessors' office establishments look like tiny outposts. The Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) seems to have no trou-

ble enlarging his staff at the upper echelons. Press men and public relations offices for ministers grow like mushrooms in a wet spring. While things are supposed to be tight and ministers tough, the government moves with lightning speed to establish Information Canada where more millions of dollars and another regiment of P R men will be added to the bureaucratic organization devoted to the dissemination of what has been called by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) "proper information" but by others "managed news".

The "just society" tag is to be discarded lest it be regarded as a mere slogan. Did anyone ever think of it as a doctrine or a commitment? There may be those who think it expedient to prepare for the day when the charisma and the image of 1968 are worn thin or worn out, but I believe it would be far wiser and far more responsible to make sure that such a valued and valuable group as the Economic Council be allowed to fulfil its important role without carping restraints and petty restrictions.

I hope whoever is to speak for the government tonight will assure the House and the country that this very valuable body will not be curtailed in its effectiveness by the sort of suggestion we heard some weeks ago.

Mr. Paul Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the first question on this subject asked by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) was on December 12. Since that time the hon. member certainly is aware that the 1969-70 estimates have been tabled and referred to committee for study. This would seem to be the best forum for a rational discussion of the adequacy of the funds allotted to the Economic Council. The fact that unlimited funds are not available, or that every request made by the Economic Council is not granted, is common to almost every department of government. The fact that each request for an increase in funds is not granted is in no way an indication that the government is not appreciative of the work being done by the Economic Council.

GRAIN—ADVICE TO RAPESEED PRODUCERS
RESPECTING MARKETS

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, on February 23, I directed a question to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) regarding the position of rapeseed producers in respect of markets. I asked the question