

Government Organization

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Now they will have time to dream up more taxes.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Now we can have two or three budgets a year instead of one.

Mr. Hales: Yes. I disagree with the minister's assertion that the recommendation with regard to the Mint came from the Glassco report. I do not think it made any such suggestion, nor did it say that the Receiver General of Canada ought to be the purchasing agent of Canada. I am sure that Glassco would have preferred to see this activity left to what might be termed the secretary-treasurer of the corporation of Canada.

Having made these remarks I shall finish by saying that we look forward to hearing further comments from other hon. members. When we examine the specific clauses of the bill I am sure hon. members on this side of the house will have a great deal to say about the proposed changes.

Mr. Burton: Mr. Chairman, as has already been noted, the establishment of this new department is the result of some of the recommendations of the Glassco report. As the hon. member for Wellington noted, that report was submitted to the government of Canada on October 1, 1962. Now, six years and several months later, we are finally establishing this department. In delaying so long in the establishment of the department the government has not displayed the efficiency that the commission recommended it ought to display.

The bill also provides for the appointment of two deputy ministers. This move may be justified by the proposed structure of the department and especially by the structure of the lower levels. Yet at first blush it could be questioned. Clause 44(2) on page 16 of the bill says in part:

The Minister shall

(a) investigate and develop services for increasing the efficiency and economy of the public service of Canada;

Many will wonder whether these aims can be achieved by using the means proposed. I am sympathetic to the idea of having adequate management at any particular level of departmental structure; yet I think the proliferation of officials in various positions needs to be watched. I do not say we should decrease the number of officials in the department, but we should make sure that we do

[Mr. Hales.]

not have more people in any department than are necessary to carry forward the objectives and policies of the government with respect to that department.

As the minister noted, the new department will be concerned with purchasing supplies and other related activities. It will also rationalize services to be made available to other government departments. I think we ought to examine some of the implications of this move and determine how it may affect the operations of government and government policy. Because of many new developments in government structures this move ought to be looked at carefully, although not necessarily along the lines suggested by the hon. member for Wellington. Primarily, the new Department of Supply and Services will deal with the purchasing of supplies and with various aspects of management and technical assistance to other departments. I understand that Treasury Board exercises financial control over government operations.

Finally, there is the Department of Finance which, after all, has the primary responsibility for fiscal and monetary policy and for the over-all direction of our economic affairs. As has been noted, the Department of Finance is to be relieved of some of its responsibilities. I do not think we should criticize this move. It seems to me that the Department of Finance is becoming a department responsible for economic affairs. This development is to be welcomed since we need a department or government agency that will be able to cope with our economic problems in the future.

I think that we need better co-ordination of government programs all the way along the line. Empire building within government departments must cease. Although we all concede that civil servants serve the government well, we must also remember that at present the Public service is a fragmented structure and ought to be co-ordinated into a homogeneous whole. Very often what is said by a government department is not said on behalf of the government as a whole. Because of fragmentation within the public service it is quite possible for the voice speaking on behalf of one government department to be in conflict with voices speaking for other government departments.

● (3:40 p.m.)

When the Glassco report recommended centralized purchasing services, it was looked upon in some quarters as a great new idea. This is old hat to those of us who have lived