

*Corporate and Consumer Affairs*

recommended that the development of suitable research programs and facilities should become one of my responsibilities. This recommendation is to be found on page 21 of the interim report of the Economic Council.

The joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons also recommended that this department conduct research into a number of important matters. We fully intend to discharge the responsibilities thus recommended by the Economic Council and the joint committee. Although some parts of the department, such as the combines branch, already have an important research capability, our research responsibility applies to the whole department and our research thrust will be designed to serve the common, fundamental economic and social objectives of the department. The house will note that clause 6(2) is not confined to consumer affairs but extends research to general application in the department.

Consumer affairs is a broad concept, and it will be neither possible nor desirable to assemble in one department experts who can deal satisfactorily with the entire range of economic, sociological and technical issues in this field. We will have to ask for advice from many sources. Clause 7 of the bill will give the governor in council fairly broad authority to provide for advice and assistance to the minister from outside the government service. In particular, it is the intention of the government to establish an advisory council on consumer affairs.

The Economic Council looked into this matter with some care and reviewed the experience of the consumer council in Great Britain and the consumer advisory council in the United States. The Economic Council of Canada recommended that an advisory council be created, and the government's intention is based on this proposal.

The recommendations of the Economic Council concerning the nature of the council have not, however, been adopted unchanged. We intend to appoint a part time rather than a full time chairman, but the chairman and all the other members will be from outside the government service. Furthermore, because of the difficulty of acquiring qualified personnel at the same time for both the department and the advisory council, the secretariat of the council will be provided from departmental resources.

I have no closed mind about the future development of the advisory council but I do not think an elaborate initial structure for the council should be built up before our

[Mr. Turner.]

own organization is in place. Moreover, if I am right in believing that the joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate will again be sitting to study the general area of consumer affairs, that committee will be in a position to undertake some of the investigation of problem areas that the Economic Council appeared to have in mind for the advisory council.

It is our intention, nevertheless, that the consumer advisory council shall have an independent and important role to play. It will meet at whatever time it considers necessary. It will decide what topics to deal with. I would naturally expect to be able to ask it for assistance in dealing with specific problems. The advisory council on consumer affairs must be broadly representative of many points of view. I want, therefore, to dwell for a moment on the composition of the council. Its members are not to be appointed as representatives of special interest groups. Their selection will depend, rather, on their personal characteristics, which would include some knowledge of issues affecting consumers. Inevitably, of course, some of the council members will be associated with legitimate economic interest groups of one kind or another, but it is hoped that their views will reflect their individual convictions as well as their representational convictions.

The appointments will be for limited terms and there will be no fixed representation geographically or otherwise. I should add, Mr. Speaker, that this consumer advisory council will replace the present consumer advisory council to the food and drug directorate. We fully expect that the council will provide a balanced and well informed view of problems affecting consumers in this country.

I have tried to give the house an outline of the development of the consumer program and this will have made clear the essence of our plans. We are involved in what I think is a challenging responsibility which I have to discharge in co-operation with the provincial authorities, because I am sure we all consider ourselves as advocates of legitimate consumer interests. We are involved in the challenging responsibility of designing a blueprint for the Canadian consumer, setting goals and designing a structure to meet the needs and concerns of the modern Canadian market. Our goals are simple, and I wish to summarize them.

We wish to ensure, first, that the Canadian as a consumer is afforded full protection