

*Standards Council of Canada*

include this specific instruction in respect of the minimum number of members of the council representing consumers groups, for a number of reasons. Canada's consumers organizations are voluntary organizations whose memberships are devoted to furthering the cause of meeting the needs of consumers and of securing their protection. During the course of their existence—this is especially true of the Consumers Association of Canada—they have managed to accumulate a fair amount of expertise about desirable standards for consumer goods. They also carry out, in conjunction with other organizations, research into the effectiveness of consumer goods. Moreover, they have established relationships with similar groups in other parts of the world and have thereby gained access to considerable information about the performance of products and desirable standards.

When this bill was before the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, I was impressed, during the course of the testimony of several witnesses, with the need to ensure that people appointed to the council for the purpose of representing the interests of consumers be conversant with the technical problems associated with the establishment of standards. It therefore appeared to me that established consumers organizations, such as the Consumers Association of Canada, with their access to information and expertise, would provide an excellent medium through which such qualified people could be obtained.

During the course of the committee's hearings it became apparent that the existing standards organizations, many of which will supply members to the new Standards Council of Canada, are very much business-oriented. I do not mean this as a criticism; there is no reason why they should not be. I am simply stating a fact. In view of this fact it appeared to me that the interests of the consumer might well be overlooked unless the bill stipulated that a set number of consumers' representatives be appointed to the council. The figure of 10 consumers' representatives will obviously leave 31 other members to be appointed from existing standards organizations and other interested groups.

During the course of the discussion of this amendment in the committee two points were raised in opposition to it. The first argument against the amendment was to the effect that each of us is a consumer; therefore, each person appointed to the council will, in a sense, be representing the interests of con-

[Mr. Rowland.]

sumers. In response to such argument I can only say that the real question is one of the primary interest of persons on the council and the major brief which they hold. An industrialist may be a consumer, but he is primarily an industrialist. Therefore, I suggest that there should be people on the council who are primarily concerned with representing consumers.

The second point raised in opposition to this amendment was that the cabinet, in whose hands the selection of the council members will be placed, will obviously see to it that the consumer is adequately represented without specific instructions from Parliament. Whether or not one finds this argument to be convincing, I suppose, depends upon one's assessment of the reliability of the cabinet's judgment. Obviously, if I were convinced that the present government's judgment was always good, I would be sitting on the other side of the House. But beyond that, I do not think that it is good legislation to leave the nature and character to be assumed by such bodies as the proposed Standards Council of Canada vague and ill-defined when they have such considerable potential to affect key areas of Canadian life. It is to ensure that the proposed council always remembers the consumer that I urge acceptance of this amendment.

**Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, I will take only a moment to support the amendment that has just been moved. During our consideration of the Canada Water Act I had reason to make a somewhat similar suggestion to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene), namely, that consultations should take place between government departments, citizens groups and others interested in legislation and regulations, before they are passed. My amendment was very much along the lines of the one now proposed. The minister did not accept my amendment, on principle, saying that he did not feel he ought to be obliged to consult anybody on this question. I hope that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) will have better judgment.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder whether there would be a disposition on the part of the House to adjust slightly the program. I believe that at four o'clock there is to be a motion under Standing Order 26. I also understand that we have to make a trip to the other place. Rather than interrupt an