

Government Organization

said a moment ago, this is the rationale behind our thinking and I am satisfied that this will work satisfactorily.

In any event, may I also point out to hon. members that the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury ceases to exist under this new arrangement and this is the mechanism we have devised which we think will take its place most effectively.

The hon. member for Wellington asked a number of questions, and I shall deal with those in a moment. Also, there was a reference by an hon. member opposite to the length of time since the Glassco report was brought down for some of its recommendations to be implemented, as they are now being. This is not strictly correct. Since 1964, a number of Glassco Commission recommendations have been implemented on a progressive basis and this is merely the logical conclusion of something which has been under way for a considerable time.

With regard to the dangers of overstocking and the surplus problem in warehouses under the present arrangement, I suggest that the effect of what we are doing will be the exact opposite. By consolidating all government supplies in six very large warehouses across the country, we shall no longer have to deal with 600 centres in which supplies for government departments are stored. Also, I should say we have developed a quite sophisticated and efficient method of data processing which will enable us, when the full scheme is in effect, to determine through a set of coded numbers and the like if goods or supplies needed in Victoria or Ottawa are in Halifax or somewhere else. I do not think it is necessary to be concerned about this so called excess or surplus to which the hon. member for Wellington referred.

On the question of the Queen's Printer, I wish to make it perfectly clear in this house, and I make this a commitment at this time, that it is our intention to appoint a Queen's Printer. While the wording of the act says "may" rather than "shall"—this is a semantic rather than legal argument—I assure the house that a Queen's Printer will be appointed when the necessary authority is granted to us under this legislation.

As for moving the Mint and why that should appropriately come under the over-all framework of the Department of Supply and Service, here again the rationale behind the move is that the Mint performs essentially a service function. We have within the department perhaps more experience than other

[Mr. Jamieson.]

departments in terms of running small and large plants. For example, there is Canadian Arsenals. The responsibility of the Department of Supply and Service for this organization has built up among its officials great expertise. Our officials have great knowledge of all these matters. I think that, as with the Receiver General of Canada, this move is in line with recommendations of the Glassco Commission which suggested that common services could better be provided by a single agency. In this way the officials of specific departments and, indeed, ministers of specific departments will be relieved of the so called bookkeeping and housekeeping chores which can best be carried out under the new arrangement we are now proposing.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Some question was raised as to the future scope of the former comptroller of the treasury. I want to emphasize that while there is a pronounced change in some of the responsibility which this office will assume under its new title of the services section of the department, there will not be an immediate or overnight transition.

The Glassco commission recommended, and it is our judgment they were correct in so recommending, that the pre-audit function ought to be the responsibility of individual departments rather than the comptroller of the treasury, as at present. Hon. members will recognize this is not something which can be done equally in all departments. We anticipate it will be some time before all departments are able to carry out this work on their own. There will not be a major and immediate disruption with regard to the staff of the comptroller of the treasury because of this transfer of duties. It will be gradual.

As has happened steadily throughout the public service, there will be a certain amount of attrition. A task force has been set up to look at the whole question of a new approach to coping with the possibility of employees being displaced under the new arrangement. We are reasonably satisfied there will not be a major disruption. I can assure hon. members we are taking this into account in the phasing in plan. As the hon. member for Burnaby Seymour asked this afternoon—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

Mr. Jamieson: He keeps moving his riding. In any event, it is going to be a phasing in and we are satisfied, with the task force