

*Supply—Trade and Commerce*

Churchill was made originally First Lord of the Admiralty, as quite a young man, his first act was to call in all the senior officials and ask them what they were doing. They all told him, very readily and glibly. Then he asked them a question they had never been asked before: Why? That was something, apparently, a great many of them found difficulty in answering.

**Mr. Howe:** The efficiency of the bureau is the responsibility of the director and his deputy. They operate under the supervision of the deputy minister and the associate deputy minister of the department, who gives the bureau his attention. Other officers of the department are detailed to consider special aspects. For instance the committee on publications includes the assistant director of the bureau, but the rest of the committee were people inside the bureau, but outside the division under review.

It would be dangerous to bring in an outside firm. The cost depends entirely on the kind of information required. That is built up over the experience of the years. If we suspend a publication there are always complaints from some sources that valuable information is being cut off. We have that experience whenever we drop a publication. It takes experience to evaluate the seriousness of a complaint. I doubt if it is a job that anyone without experience in the work of statistics could perform. Our bureau is considered one of the best in the world, and we try to make sure that the work it undertakes does not go too far afield.

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** I have no reason to regard it as anything but a very good bureau. Whether it is one of the best in the world I cannot say. I am afraid that when I hear that kind of opinion expressed it only indicates to me that there is a great deal of self-satisfaction and not enough of the attitude of criticism aroused. However, I appreciate what the minister says, that it might be difficult for an outsider to come in and to assess what is going on. Yet it seems to me that nothing suggested thus far indicates that there is any acid test here.

For instance, what is the test of need? A publication is sent out. Very few people ever consider writing in to say that it was not a good one. Indeed, it may have been a good one. But what is the test to determine whether X hundreds or X thousands of dollars will be spent? To what extent are people charged for what they get? To what extent is distribution free? Four million dollars is a lot of money; and I suppose, as things stand, it is going to go up and up. It has gone up \$260,000 this year.

**Mr. Howe:** Publications are free only to those on the official list. If my hon. friend would like to have them it will cost him \$30 a year. They are sent free to trade commissioner offices, to trade offices of foreign countries located in Ottawa, and to a list of people who, for official reasons, are entitled to them. Aside from that a charge is made for each copy of a publication.

Reference has been made to the increase this year. I would point out that we had to consider the problem of old age pensions. The bureau did some work in forecasting amounts required and in setting up a check for old age pensions payments. It has done a great deal of work in connection with family allowances. Proof of age in connection with old age pensions required a great amount of work by the bureau of statistics. Usually it is work of that kind that expands the activities of the bureau. It is much easier to put new publications on than it is to take them off. However, a careful watch is kept to see that no new publication is brought out that is not required by the need of the day.

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** Let me refer to something which I believe is under consideration—and it is a very interesting thing, too. I understand the bureau is grappling with the task of producing quarterly returns of corporations, such as they have in the United States, and which I believe we have not had. There, it seems to me, is an interesting point. It would be nice to give this information—indeed I would like to have it myself. But how will it be tested? I suppose it would cost a lot of money to have it. It would not be easy to determine whether that is worthwhile or not. What is the system? Is there any test that can be applied, or do we just go on getting this, that, and the other thing which may be interesting?—because it seems to me there is no end to it, ever.

**Mr. Howe:** I am told the Department of Finance and the Bank of Canada desire the publications so that they may estimate probable revenues.

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** Do they pay for it?

**Mr. Howe:** The same person who supplies their money will pay for this.

**Mr. Argue:** I should like to refer back to a matter mentioned earlier, the new consumer price index put out by the bureau of statistics. The hon. member for Battle River pointed out that agriculture does not wish to go back to the conditions of 1935-39. I am wondering if there is going to be a change in the base of agricultural statistics to a new 1949 base. I do not know whether that would