

Standards Council of Canada

financing and operations. Policy will be determined by the council alone. To avoid the need to rely on special interests for financial assistance the council will, however, be entirely financed by parliamentary appropriation, as per clause 17 of the bill, and will be accountable only to Parliament. Obviously, there is a difference between the "government" and "Parliament" in these matters.

The possibility of the council financing part of its own expenses by membership fees and industry contributions was considered. However, in attempting to do so the council would have competed with private standards-writing organizations which rely on these very sources to finance their own activities. Again, it was decided not to weaken these organizations. That is one of the reasons there will be parliamentary appropriation.

Quite normally, the council will be expected to report annually to Parliament. Usually, the minister rises and says he wishes to table the annual report of such-and-such an organization; the minister certainly does not write the report. He may not even look at it before it is tabled. He acknowledges receipt of the document and gives it to the Parliament.

The accounts of the council will be subject to audit by the Auditor General as provided for in sections 19 and 20. If the council should fail to perform adequately, the option of discontinuing financial assistance always remains as a last resort, but it is for Parliament to decide.

Some people might ask, in fact some have already asked, why is government action necessary? I hope I have suggested some reasons by now. The government, in any broad field such as standardization which reaches far into the lives of many people, has a responsibility, not to control the field but to ensure that the public interest is protected. What the standards council provides is a forum where all interested parties can participate. Thus, the public interest can be identified through debate, discussion and consensus.

The government could have turned over its funds to an existing institution and said, "You do the job". However, it was believed that no agency existed which was national enough in scope and representative of enough interested parties, not only at the standards writing level but also and, mainly, at the policy-making level. No such organization exists at the present time. This is why we are, hopefully, creating one now.

[Mr. Pepin.]

In the areas of standardization where good work is already being done, it is proposed that maximum use be made by the council of existing organizations. In areas where there is a need for new activity and initiative, a broad, objective forum is provided, independent in its policy formation and execution, able to identify and resolve problems as Canadian industry further develops and trade further expands.

It has been suggested, Mr. Speaker, that we might continue to look for "the best possible structure". That might be an interesting academic exercise, but the problems which are posing themselves in the field of standardization are serious and need full attention now. "The best possible structure" has been studied carefully for four years. The government consulted provincial governments, associations and organizations across the country. I suggest that the House approve the concept of this bill today. I will be pleased, with the support of my learned officials, to answer any detailed questions in committee.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Willington): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a few minutes to ramble on and react to some of the statements made by the minister. I am reacting because I was not aware of the points that would be made by the minister. I hope there is a possibility that some of the observations we on this side of the House make will be taken into consideration by the minister and his department and perhaps some modifications will be made to the present proposals.

After listening to the friendly and genial minister, it is difficult to immediately start criticizing because he spent his time smiling and encouraging fellowship. I wondered whether he was trying to convince the House of the importance of the particular bill before us or just himself. Perhaps he was trying to convince the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford), who listened very intently to his remarks. Possibly, there has been some discussion behind the curtains and sound and solid argument between the two departments on the actual intent of the legislation.

The minister went into great detail about the tremendous amount of consultation which has taken place during the past four years. In a very general way, he indicated the basic aims and philosophy of the standards council of Canada and emphasized the necessity for its establishment. It is difficult to quarrel with the fact that consultation is necessary. It is