

census were carried on until the first half of the 20th century. In 1871, legislation provided for the first Canadian census—which could be considered as the first national census—in spite of the fact that at that time, a permanent census or statistics bureau had not yet been established.

In the 19th century, statistics compiled by various departments covered such subjects as banks, insurance, crime, shipping, postal service, trade, internal revenue and immigration.

In 1905, there was a complete review of the Census and Statistics Act. A permanent office was established and the scope of its activities was extended in order to include all general statistics. The responsibility with regard to this law was then given to the Minister of Agriculture. A few years later, in 1912, the administrative responsibilities were transferred to the Department of Trade and Commerce where they have been ever since. It was also at that time that a ministerial commission was appointed and asked to make a complete review of the statistics system in Canada. The Commission recommended the creation of a central bureau of statistics to co-ordinate all statistics in Canada under the same organization. The recommendation was accepted and it was followed by the proclamation of the 1918 Statistics Act. As I have just said, the act reunited under the same title all existing laws on statistics and it resulted in the establishment of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics as it exists today.

[English]

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics is a central and separate agency of government which reports to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The bureau has some 3,700 employees in Ottawa and at eight regional offices located in main centres across Canada. Its annual budget has reached a total of approximately \$33 million a year.

The bureau produces statistical information on virtually the whole range of economic and social characteristics of the nation. Statistical collection activities range throughout the nation from large industrial cities to remote northern areas. The finished statistics which result from these activities vary from well-known national aggregates such as the gross national product, the consumer price index, and the employment and unemployment totals for Canada, to details about urban localities a few city blocks in size.

The statistical output of the bureau consists, for the most part, of some 1,100 separate publications, some of them weekly, monthly and quarterly, and others published annually or occasionally. The bureau output also reaches the public in the form of computer tapes and sets of punched cards, and there is a substantial output in the form of replies to individual inquiries from businesses, governments and the general public. Perhaps the best known D.B.S. activity is the decennial census of population and agriculture which, as honourable senators know, will be carried out in June 1971.

Canada's statistical system is quite centralized by comparison, for example, with the systems of the United States and Britain. In addition to having certain economic and technical advantages, centralization facilitates the main duty given to D.B.S. in 1918, development of an integrated and consistent system of statistics in which the various elements form part of the unified overall program. The advantages of this include, for example, comparability between the various statistical series so that they may more readily be used in conjunction with other series in practical applications.

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics is not the only agency in Canada engaged in the collection of data for statistical purposes, and it is for the express purpose of avoiding the duplication and confusion that would result from a completely uncontrolled situation that the Statistics Act assigns to D.B.S. the prime responsibility for the co-ordination of the statistical system as a whole. Thus, for instance, co-operative arrangements have been worked out with most of the provinces for shared surveys in a large number of areas, to reduce the burden on those who supply information. Further co-operation with the provinces could be expected to result from the proposed amendments in this bill.

I will not at this time elaborate further on the operations of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics except to say—and here I am sure of the agreement of all honourable senators—that the bureau stands at the centre of a national statistical system which has evolved as one of the best in the world, and which has successfully maintained the integrity and quality of its product.

Two features of the present Statistics Act are regarded as essential to the effective operation of any statistical system, and these would be retained in the bill now before the house. The first of these is a legal obligation on the part of citizens to provide information to the statistical agency. Penalties associated with this legal power have been rarely used in Canada, but collection "under authority of the Statistics Act" is a necessary element in the process of persuasion by which data are normally secured.

The second essential feature is a legal guarantee that information about particular persons or organizations will not be used without their consent for purposes other than that for which the information was supplied. A thorough review has been made of the general question of confidentiality and the secrecy section of the act. It was concluded that individual returns collected for statistical purposes should continue to be used only for statistical purposes, and that information provided to D.B.S. by individual persons, governments and businesses should continue, except as I shall outline in a few moments, to be available only to employees of the bureau. Secrecy of the data provided to the statistical agency remains an essential foundation for reliable statistics, and far outweighs any benefits which might arise from a less restrictive policy.