

*Establishment of New Departments*

food and drug directorate; (b) the combines investigation branch, (c) an economic research branch, responsible for research into such items as matters arising out of the combines legislation, legislation on patents, companies, consumer credit and other economic questions; (d) administration of legislation on consumer credit; and (e) administration of any other legislation related primarily to the consumer interest.

The association is most anxious that this committee should be set up with a minimum of delay. I would point out that this afternoon the Prime Minister stated: "I am sure that additional steps will be required." He was, of course, referring to additional steps in government reorganization, and in the reassembly of the work of the departments.

I am sure that millions of consumers in this country tonight are convinced not only that additional steps will be required, but that this particular step of setting up a department of consumer affairs is long overdue. I would urge upon the government the necessity for including in this particular reorganization the beginnings of a full fledged department of consumer affairs, with a minister whose whole time will be devoted to it.

The urgency is great. From month to month we find the cost of living rising. Complaints are coming from consumers about labelling, deceptive packaging, about their being kept in ignorance as to the cost of credit, and about many other things. When these complaints have been brought up in the house on a number of past occasions since the beginning of the year, no one on the government side of the house has been in a position to answer with respect to them. I urge that if the government is serious about representing the interests of the people of this country, that it should not stop after representing only the sectional interests of industrial workers, farmers and people in various occupations in this country, but that it should take time to look at the Canadian people as a whole in that activity which concerns all of us, namely the buying of the things in this country that we all need from day to day.

I think we ought to set up without delay a department of consumer affairs as part of the reconstituted set-up of government.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Chairman, when I saw the resolution on the order paper last Monday grouping five departments together, I immediately recognized the astuteness of the move. Instead of having a single resolution, and a single piece of legislation covering each

department, which would be the regular and orthodox way of handling the matter, the government has attempted to cut down debate by grouping the five departments under one resolution.

As does everyone who tries to outmanoeuvre the House of Commons, the government has fallen into a trap that only it could fall into. It has left out one of the key departments, the department of forestry and rural development. I mention that, Mr. Chairman, because my remarks—

**Mr. Nicholson:** Would the hon. member permit a question? Did he hear the remarks made by the house leader late this afternoon on this very subject? Have those remarks been reported to him, if he did not hear them?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I did not hear the remarks of the house leader, but they were reported to me. I did not want to embarrass anybody by taking his statement too seriously. I simply point out that in the effort to try to reduce debate, the government is going to make debate chaotic. Several members in all parties would like to deal at some length with several of these departments. We still have hope of course for some sort of answer from each of the ministers involved, as to what his policies are.

Since December, when the announcement was made, we have been waiting and waiting for the minister to bring some statement before the house, so that we would have a chance of considering constructively policy suggestions, which the minister could work into his new department.

Having said all this in the way of introduction, I should now like to get down to the points in the resolution at hand. One of the statements made this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition was that the best reason for change was experience, as opposed to the concept of change for experimental purposes. The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka I think got the kernel of the debate correctly when he said that it does not make any difference how many departments you create, it is what you do with the departments that counts. Therefore on the basis of the admittedly limited experience I have had, I am going to discuss the question of the reorganization of departments.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that from his experience he thought there should be two levels of cabinet. He inferred that there should be the senior ministers and,