

Government Organization

recasting of their functions. If the government, without mentioning the department of forestry and rural development, had the right to put in several clauses on that aspect, I suggest that we have the right to ask that the several functions of the department of the registrar general be enlarged so as to include a review of prices and other matters of interest to consumers.

I submit that the case is a clear one on our side. Indeed, I confess to some amazement that the Chair found difficulty in accepting this amendment. I hope Your Honour will consider the arguments I have advanced and that you will find that this amendment, is, in fact, in order.

● (8:00 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, with your permission I will just say a few words to support the arguments raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) about the validity of the proposed amendment.

It is true that an amendment to clause 6 was presented but that amendment dealt only with the title and not with the duties of the new minister.

Those are therefore two separate things since the amendment to clause 6 dealt only with the form of the bill whereas this proposal deals rather with the substance of the bill, which is quite another matter.

Clause 6 was meant only to change the name. It would probably have been a good thing because I think that a complete lack of imagination was shown in giving that title to the new minister.

I think that whoever suggested to call it the department of the registrar general showed a lack of imagination; his vocabulary is limited and he is not familiar with the dictionary or something like that. I can see myself asking a question to the minister of the solicitor general; it does not sound right. He is not called the minister of the solicitor general but the Solicitor General.

It seems to me that whoever drafted the bill should have a better vocabulary and know the dictionary better, or that the President of the Privy Council should change the name of that department, especially if he is to be its first head. I wonder how he would like to be called Mr. Registrar General? He would not be a minister but only a registrar. But the government did not want to accept that change.

But there is no mention of the name in the new amendment; it deals only with the substance of the bill, that is to say it proposes to add another duty. And now I would like to support also the second argument after supporting the first one.

It is that the proposed new role to be given to the minister does not contradict the one that is to be given to him under clause 8, as it stands now, since it is said in subparagraph (a):

(a) Combines, mergers, monopolies and restraint of trade;

The amendment seeks to add:

(b) Review of prices and matters of concern to consumers.

Well, there is a direct link between the matter of combines, monopolies, restrictive practices, and the review of prices which interest the consumers.

Therefore the amendment does not go against the provisions of the clause of the bill. On the contrary, it completes it. The amendment only makes things clearer and I wonder why it should not be accepted, not only from the point of view of the rules but also because it adds something important to the bill.

Clause 8 is intended to prevent combines and monopolies. The consumer should not be overlooked. That is precisely the object of the amendment and I wonder how anyone could object to it.

Third, why the amendment should be in order? The government now submits to us for discussion a bill to set up a new department that of the registrar general. If, at any point a member realizes something is lacking and makes a suggestion with a view to improving the new department, I fail to see how this could be out of order. It behooves the members to amend bills so as to perfect them. That is the business of the members of the opposition.

I feel the amendment proposed by the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is intended to improve the new department we are asked to institute today. We are not dealing here with a mere question of title but with the study of prices and questions of consumer interest. This would not only improve the role of the department or its contribution, but our whole legislation as well.

That is why we feel the amendment is in order and that the arguments brought forward previously did not take into account all