

*Corporate and Consumer Affairs*

I point out that at page 20 of the Economic Council's interim report this statement appears:

In view of the wide scope of consumer interests and the many departments which are engaged in activities affecting consumers, there is no possibility of concentrating all these activities in a single department, nor would it be desirable to try to do so.

I put that reference on the record during the debate on the resolution, but there is another quotation on page 28 that I overlooked which reads as follows:

It is clear that the range of consumer interests is so wide and so diverse that it is not possible for a single department of government, or indeed even a single level of government, to deal effectively with all of them.

**Mr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question at this point? I have already dwelt at the resolution stage on the difference between co-ordination, initiation and centralization of administration. I wonder whether the hon. member has had an opportunity to look at page 25 of the report of the Economic Council, where this statement appears:

We therefore recommend that legislation be drafted to provide for an administrative unit in the Department of the Registrar General whose chief concern will be the efficient administration of these provisions.

It is the drafting of this administrative unit that we are talking about.

**Mr. Nielsen:** But surely, Mr. Speaker, the recommendation of the Economic Council that a permanent secretariat be set up is the administrative unit to which the report refers. Certainly it is not a new department.

In addition to these recommendations and observations of the council there are references in the fourth annual report which express grave fears about the "Parkinsonian growth of the bureaucracy". We have before us a bill embodying a new department whose functions are already being carried on fairly successfully by other departments. There is no doubt in my mind, sir, and I am sure in the minds of most members, that co-ordination is necessary. But we do not need this vast structure that the government is attempting to create to achieve the co-ordination envisaged by the Economic Council.

**Mr. Nasserden:** Another empire.

● (4:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Nielsen:** The hon. member says it is another empire. I like to think of it in terms of another case of a cuckoo in the nest, like

[Mr. Nielsen.]

the Department of Industry which began with a modest budget of \$25 million, that now runs to more than \$140 million. We are being asked to accept another little bird in the nest, another little bird which soon will grow into a great, swelling monster that will shove around and dwarf all others in the nest.

**An hon. Member:** An albatross.

**Mr. Nielsen:** That is what will happen.

**Mr. MacEwan:** It will be a cross between a chicken and a horse.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I think this new department is for the birds. Its purpose of protecting consumers is laudable in principle; no one can argue with that. Goodness knows, after four years of this kind of government the consumer needs protecting. This government is the highest spending in the country's history. Under it we have seen the highest cost of living in the country's history and the highest taxes in the country's history.

**Mr. Woolliams:** And the highest level of propaganda.

**Mr. Nielsen:** This is a highfalutin' government living high off the hog. The only reason for creating another department at this time in this field is to provide protection for consumers against inordinately high prices. That is what we are concerned about, the protection of the consumer, not the creation of more soft leather seats for bureaucrats.

This bill does not provide the consumer with that protection. The minister cannot point to any clause in the bill which gives him the power that he has under the Combines Investigation Act, for instance. The provisions of this bill give the minister no enforcement powers.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Existing law covers much that the bill ought to cover.

**Mr. Nielsen:** No power is given to the minister to deal with high prices or to prevent the manipulation of food and other consumer prices. No power is given to the minister to prevent the exploitation of wage earners by profit-hungry corporations. Let us face the fact. Food prices are going up and will continue to go up. What will the government do about this? What provision of this bill will prevent food prices from rising? What provision in this bill will empower the minister to prevent food prices from rising?