

*Corporate and Consumer Affairs*

the Registrar General the various agencies of government dealing with the conduct of business in our private enterprise system. The combines branch, restrictive trade practices, patents, trademarks, bankruptcy and incorporations all were brought under the same roof.

● (9:10 p.m.)

While I propose to devote a good many of my remarks to the subject of consumer affairs I think it is appropriate that I first say something about the nature of the department as a whole, particularly because under clause 3 of the bill we are asking parliament to give it a new name. It will be recalled that the Royal Commission on Government Organization, the Glassco commission, recommended major reforms and shifts, in the division and focus of responsibilities in the federal government.

**Mr. Nielsen:** May I ask the minister a question at this point. Just now, and also when the resolution was being considered, with his reference to giving the department a new name the minister leaves the impression that the Department of the Registrar General is simply being renamed by this bill as the department of corporate and consumer affairs. Perhaps he can clear up this impression that is being left. Is the effect of this bill simply to rename the Registrar General's department, or will the effect be to set up an additional, separate department to that which is now known as the Department of the Registrar General?

**Mr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my answer to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) is going to disappoint him, because part of his argument is going to be based, as it was on the resolution stage, on his contention that this is an additional department of government and, in his mind, an addition to what he was prone to call the bureaucracy in the government service. He is partly right, partly wrong; half right and half wrong: wrong for the right reasons and right for the wrong reasons. In effect it will be a new department, but it will assume the present responsibilities of the Department of the Registrar General, and the functions of the Registrar General are continued by the provisions of clause 8 of the bill. So that while it is a new department it does not add to the structure of government. It assumes the present agencies now within the responsibility of the Registrar General and adds two further responsibilities. The first is found in clause 5(a)—consumer affairs, and the second is found in the addition to clause 5(b)—corporate securities.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Clause 6.

**Mr. Turner:** Well, clause 5(b); and clause 6 spells out the nature of the responsibilities for consumer affairs. I hope that has clarified the matter for the hon. member. In any event I am sure we will all wait with a great deal of impatience to hear what he has to say about this particular subject.

As I said, the Government Organization Act of 1966 was designed to remedy a number of the defects that had shown up in the structure, and that were pointed up in the very thorough examination given to it by Mr. Glassco and his associates. The agencies then grouped together to form the Department of the Registrar General were those concerned with corporations, combines, mergers, monopolies in restraint of trade, bankruptcy and insolvency, patents, copyrights and trademarks. These, as I said a moment ago, are the matters that are referred to and continued under clause 5 of the bill, except that consumer affairs and corporate securities have been added.

The work of the existing agencies is based on detailed statutes which are strictly construed by the courts. There is a growing body of case law, and the statutes are administered to a large extent by lawyers. There was increasing danger that in isolation the legislation might be administered and revised with a purely technical bias rather than in terms of its fundamental social and economic purposes.

Government policy in this whole area is sometimes described by academic writers as public policy toward business organization, or as the social control of business. In more mundane language what is involved is the setting of the ground rules for business activity. These laws provide the basic framework for business activity, and as such they are laws of general application. They may therefore readily be distinguished from laws which arise out of economic policies designed to improve the performance of particular industries in our economy.

Because laws of general application are involved, their economic impact only becomes apparent in the long run. But they are no less important for this reason than economic policies which have a more immediate impact upon the economy. Each of the agencies grouped together in this department is affected by and affects in turn economic policies in other areas. These agencies and the statutes they administer are therefore an integral part of the economic fabric of the country. So, Mr.