

National Economic Development Board

that the Minister of Finance is to have a new full time official at his disposal plus another advisory committee. It is a device for reorganizing a section of the Department of Finance in a way which will circumvent the civil service commission. The staff of the board can be recruited without going through the civil service commission, and their salaries can be set by the treasury board and thus be influenced greatly by the Minister of Finance.

The duties of the board as set out in clause 9 seem to boil down to a continual study of Canada's long term economic prospects and of the methods which could be employed to stimulate a more adequate rate of economic growth. In addition, the board may be used to undertake special investigations and studies of various matters. Surely, if this board is to have no real or independent status its objectives could be achieved by some senior official of the department with the necessary staff.

There is a provision in clause 10 for the board, by order of the minister or of the governor in council, to conduct public inquiries and call witnesses. But it remains to be seen what kind of inquiries will be held and how the proposed powers will be used. Neither the Minister of Finance nor the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys has said much about this. Clause 12 of the bill stipulates that the board shall report—

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while we are interested in these observations, most of them unfounded I think on the part of the hon. member, he might be persuaded to delay his clause by clause observations until we get into committee.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order which the hon. gentleman has raised, there has been no attempt on the part of my hon. friend to discuss the clauses in detail. This bill has to do with a national economic development board, which is described in the bill. My hon. friend is seeking, from the anatomy of the bill, to try to form some picture of the proposed anatomy of this board; and I have never heard before this kind of technical objection raised on second reading.

Mr. Churchill: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, which has been raised, on many an occasion in the House of Commons over many years, on second reading of a bill the general principles are discussed. Clauses are reserved for committee. That is the normal practice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul): I have listened with great attention to the remarks which have been made by the hon. member for Davenport, and I think that he was discussing the principle of the bill. He made only a reference to clause 9. But on the point

[Mr. Gordon.]

of order which has been raised, I am sure all hon. members will try to permit the hon. member who has the floor to continue the debate.

Mr. Pickersgill: Like the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys.

Mr. Gordon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the way the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys did that. I have no intention of discussing the bill on a clause by clause basis today, but I can assure the minister that we will do so when the bill goes to committee. However, the bill does stipulate—and this is something that I wish to remark upon—that the board shall co-operate with all departments, branches and agencies of the government, including the national productivity council. I was surprised to find that it was necessary to put such a clause or such phrases into the bill, because surely they are redundant and unnecessary. I had assumed that all government departments and agencies co-operated with each other. How else can the government function? I found that the specific reference to the national productivity council was at least intriguing because, as hon. members know, the productivity council, following the report of its special mission to Europe, was proposing to extend its scope and functions to include a review of economic prospects and of ways of stimulating the economy. With these added functions and the provision for a full time staff, the productivity council might have been in a position to do a useful job. But now the work is to be divided between one public body, the productivity council, and what may well become merely a branch of the Department of Finance. One may wonder whether this is not a deliberate attempt to emasculate and downgrade the productivity council.

I suggest that instead of setting up this new board, which according to the bill seems intended to be little more, as I have said, than an appendage of the Department of Finance, it might have been more effective to change the complexion of the national productivity council and to enlarge its scope. In our view, Mr. Speaker, there is need for a separate national economic council with a full time staff, and I should like to indicate some of the things for which in our view such a council should be responsible.

First, it should be the principal or one of the principal arms of government, and as such it would be necessary for it to be a separate and a public body. Second, such a council should report to a designated minister, in this case probably the Minister of Finance, as all boards, commissions and government agencies should do. But it should