

(d) to make recommendations as to the organization of statistics as the basic data required for social and economic investigations;

(e) to publish such reports and findings as may be considered to be in the public interest.

Mr. BENNETT: As an advisory committee?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes, and this is an advisory committee.

Mr. BENNETT: No, no.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes, absolutely. My right hon. friend cannot get away from that fact. Whether you wish to debate the question of the desirability of calling it a committee or a commission, it all comes to the same thing in the end; it is an advisory committee. The government takes the responsibility for asking parliament to appropriate sufficient funds to enable it to appoint an advisory body, composed of those in whom it will have confidence, to act as experts on a great social problem with which the country is faced, and to permit that body to make recommendations, to offer advice and to supervise. With the exception of the supervision, all the other functions are named as those of the economic council which was to advise the late administration.

My right hon. friend says the present measure constitutes a violation of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, or a violation of some democratic principle. I say it does nothing of the kind. Ministerial responsibility remains just where it properly belongs, namely, upon the ministry. It is responsible first of all for recommending to parliament the appointment of a body charged with the duties here named. That is the case whether the body be a commission specially appointed to deal with the one problem of relief and unemployment or whether it be an economic council to deal with such problems as may be assigned to it. May I say in passing that in the course of the discussion on the bill having to do with the economic council, one of the problems which it was said would be assigned to that body was the very problem of relief and unemployment, and that would be a suitable body to deal with the problem.

I say that ministerial responsibility is preserved by the government, first of all, taking the responsibility for recommending legislation. Ministerial responsibility continues with respect to all that the commission does or fails to do. It makes recommendations for which the government must take the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting, and the government will be held accountable by the House of Commons for either accepting or rejecting such recommendations.

I venture to say some recommendations may be made by the commission which the government will not find it possible to accept, but should such be the case the government will have very good reasons to give the House of Commons for not accepting the recommendations made. On the other hand, if the government does accept a recommendation, acting upon it becomes a government responsibility, and the government cannot shift that responsibility on to the commission. I repeat that the commission is advisory, and the government is responsible for all its acts, and for what it does with respect to the recommendations. So that the whole doctrine of ministerial responsibility is preserved, and similarly every democratic principle of government.

May I point out, however, wherein the body proposed by the present administration is infinitely better suited to conduct this particular work than the body which my right hon. friend intended to institute when he was in office. The economic council was, in considerable part, to be composed of permanent members of the civil service. In selecting those members the government was taking officials whose time is already fully occupied, in the positions they are holding. This parliament votes salaries to the head of the research department, to the head of the statistical department and to heads of other departments who undoubtedly would be among the number called to an economic council. These gentlemen are giving, or are supposed to be giving, all their time to their work, in the positions they now hold. On the other hand by appointing a national advisory committee or commission, whichever you wish to call it, along the line indicated in the bill, and giving the government a free hand to select the personnel, it thereby has an opportunity to search through the length and breadth of the dominion in order to secure the services of persons in the best positions to give the kind of study and advice which would be expected in connection with an important matter such as this. An effort will be made to have the members give, if possible, all of their time to this important work. So that my right hon. friend is not only completely beside the mark when he seeks to have the committee believe that we are violating some doctrine of ministerial responsibility, but he is criticizing in essence his own action of the previous session. In so doing he is reflecting not upon the measure of the present administration but upon himself with respect to what evidently was intended under the measure he introduced.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: That committee to which the Prime Minister refers is hardly an apt illustration. It was purely an honorary advisory committee, there was no provision