

Government Organization

there is a growing tendency to do so. We have carried out some useful and valuable work in this connection. Hon. members may have noticed details of a study having to do with the ages of various senior officials in the public service and pointing out problems which may develop within a short time when a large number of experienced personnel reach retirement age at virtually the same time. This is the work of the bureau of management consulting service.

Hon. members may also have noted that the bill provides for the designation of the Minister of Supply and Services as the Receiver General of Canada. This, again, is in line with the whole concept of centralization, within one department and under one minister, of responsibility not only for the paying out side, the distribution of money, but also for the receipt of public moneys and the preparation of accounts. By designating the Minister of Supply and Services as the Receiver General we arrive at a straight line proposition from the receipt of the moneys to their ultimate payment and the preparation of the accounts relating to them.

In addition to the services I have already outlined in connection with cheque issuing, the service side will also assume from the Comptroller of the Treasury responsibility for administration and accounting in connection with superannuation, employee benefit programs and a variety of similar services.

It might be useful at this point to discuss briefly the philosophy behind this department. I think it is reflected in the Glassco assessment that an organization whose responsibilities are as broad and whose objectives are as wide as those of government ought to have a common service element. It is evident that apart from the financial advantages of reorganization along these lines it was wasteful of the time of individual departments to find themselves obliged to perform these support services for themselves. This is the whole rationale behind what we are now proposing. I am satisfied, from what I have noted to date and from what has already been accomplished, that this is a very wise proposal and one which will be of considerable benefit not only in terms of dollars and cents, though this is important, but also because it will enable us to develop within a single department a pool of talent and expertise which will be available to the whole of the public service. This will discourage the proliferation of service branches in individual departments, none of which might be large

enough or sufficiently equipped in itself to do the job required. From now on they will be able to ask this new department to provide them with service on a reasonable basis.

My own personal approach is that these departments will be clients of ours. This work is not something we can do on a casual basis without being concerned about timeliness or efficiency. Ours, quite properly, is a business-oriented department and the more it can be business-oriented the better. I cannot sufficiently emphasize my determination to ensure that our clients are happy.

In some of these cases, as I have said, we have statutory responsibility. The departments have no choice but to accept these services from us; they are not able to pick and choose. For this reason it is my intention to establish an advisory committee within the government service, probably at deputy minister level, so that there may be a group which will have an opportunity to pass judgment on the manner in which we are performing and which can let us know, if necessary, where we are falling down on the job. This group would also be able to make suggestions as to ways in which we could improve our service.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I ask a question at this point? I agree wholeheartedly with the general philosophy the minister is advancing about the advantages to be obtained by providing a central service carried out by people with special talent and expertise. However, the system might break down if there were too many demands on it at any one time and staff was not available to meet all the demands. I assume that some orders of priority will have to be established. But who is to determine the order of priority? Will it be the responsibility of the hon. gentleman?

• (3:20 p.m.)

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, to some degree it is. The position is that we will consult—in fact, we have already started consultations—with the different departments regarding the timing of bringing them under, if you like, our over-all umbrella. We have a chart, which I would be delighted to show the hon. member, indicating the progression up to 1971 or 1972, before we embrace them all. It is for precisely the reason that the hon. member mentioned that we have done it in this way. We do not want to bite off more than we can chew.

This is why we have also established a pilot project in terms of material management in