

*Supply—Privy Council*

of the same praise and the same thanks for the competent way in which they fulfil their task.

But what the director wished to emphasize clearly in his report was precisely that Canadians should be shown the importance of implementing with the utmost energy the Combines Investigation Act, and told that all necessary measures should be taken to secure as adequate and as complete a staff as possible. I should say that, to this end, a large scale examination has been held the results of which are already being quite sensibly felt. But on the other hand, I must say that although a larger senior and intermediate staff has already been hired, we are nevertheless maintaining our efforts in this direction and we hope to reach a point where a sufficient number of people from the outside will have been sold on joining the department to enable us to implement all the projects we have in mind. But the Office of Investigation and Research, in spite of the somewhat limited staff available, has to date, surely accomplished a tremendous amount of work during the past years. It is well known that due to business development, industrialization, the number of investigations required has increased considerably and it is surprising that, in spite of all the work now being done within the Office of Investigation and Research, such a large scale investigation as that now being carried out on the trusts, or, if you will, the mergers, the regrouping of industries and trades, would have been undertaken.

I am told this survey is the most important ever undertaken by the investigation and research branch since its inception. To mention but one instance, in February 1966, with a staff of only 26 civil servants, 109 files were opened and 51 investigations are in progress; 14 other lesser investigations, shall we say, of a preliminary nature, are also under way.

I said a while ago that the government is aware of the need to consider the administration of combines investigations according to the economic needs of the country and also according to the particular needs of consumers. In this regard, I would point out that the government has asked the Economic Council to undertake an extensive survey of the relationship between prices, costs, productivity and income, with a view to defining means of maintaining our economic growth.

Second, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) recently advised the members in this house that he had asked the Economic Council to

make a survey to determine in which sectors federal intervention might prove useful to the consumers, the extent to which it should be done and the means of doing it. This proves that the government is well aware of the perspectives in which our Combines Investigations Act should be applied, as well as of its role with regard to the consumers.

The need to revise and re-examine more closely the said act was discussed earlier, especially when my estimates were first brought up. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), with the obvious intention of proving to be objective, and with great moderation, suggested that the government define a new policy in this field.

In this connection, I must say that I do not intend to start a debate on the advisability of changing the government policy followed for many years in connection with the appointment of chairmen and members of royal commissions. This is not my responsibility. If some royal commissions are included in my estimates, it is not because I am responsible, as President of the Privy Council, for their work and even less for the appointment of commissioners and the procedure related thereto, but the votes of those commissions reporting to the government and to the Prime Minister are included in the estimates of the Privy Council for purely administrative and financial reasons.

It is clear that the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition and by other hon. members, namely those for Peace River and Greenwood (Messrs. Baldwin and Brewin) will have to be studied seriously. However, I can say that, as a member of the bar and as a citizen, I fully agree with the remarks made about the need, in any case, to review, reconsider and revise the Canadian Investigation Act. It is clear that it does not give enough directives.

Second, as mentioned earlier by the hon. member for Greenwood, even if enough scope must be left the commissioners, more rigid standards could probably be imposed and, third, some procedures which do not exist at present in the act and which are not available to the commissioners should be included, in order to make the commissioners' work more flexible and above all more efficient.

I think I will not say more on this matter. I repeat that, as President of the Privy Council, I am not responsible for the appointment of the commissioners, and it will be easily understood that if any government policy is to