

Another change of a minor nature but of some importance relates to information from public institutions. The present act exempts from secrecy all operational information about hospitals, universities and similar non-commercial institutions other than financial information. It is proposed to alter the act to permit disclosure of financial information in view of the widespread interest in these publicly supported institutions. I think this is a valuable change. These institutions are public and this information on finances will be of value to people who use this kind of statistic.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the bill before you aims at providing a better service both for the governments involved and the public. The public will fill out fewer forms and still be assured of their privacy. Although "Statistics Canada" will have access to income tax returns, secrecy standards will be maintained at a high level. Because of diminished duplication and increased co-operation between the federal and provincial governments, statistics will be provided more rapidly with greater accuracy and at lower cost. Some provisions in the act that have proved in the past to be too restrictive have been adjusted while others have been strengthened. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics has been a useful vehicle. As with the family car that has served us well, we have a vague feeling of ingratitude when we have to trade it in but then we greet the new one with the expectation that it is better equipped to meet today's needs. It is in this spirit that we welcome "Statistics Canada".

I commend this legislation to the attention of hon. members and look forward to receiving the benefit of their views on this important act.

**Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that I cannot share the minister's closing sentiment of welcoming this piece of legislation. There are four features upon which I wish to comment. The first is the penalty feature of the bill; the second is the burden that returns of statistics imposes on business generally; the third is the need to protect the privacy of the individual, the secrecy features on which the Parliamentary Secretary has placed some emphasis, and the fourth is the increased cost of maintaining the statistics branch.

Before dealing with these four matters, however, I should like to say something about what seems to be one of the chief reasons for bringing in this bill: that is, to abolish the titles, Dominion Bureau of Statistics and Dominion Statistician and to substitute the term "Statistics Canada". I can see no good reason for this. It seems to be only a continuation of an attack which has been going on for some years on what we might call traditional titles, particularly those that use the term "Dominion". This is an honourable term and one which in this case has attained a particular status in the eyes of the public. I think it should be maintained. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics is generally referred to as "DBS" and this term is understood by everyone in the country. "Statistics Canada" would be shortened to "SC" which would not mean anything to most people. Those of us who come from British Columbia and Alberta might think that it

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stood for Social Credit. The Parliamentary Secretary will understand this, as will the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford), I am sure, who is smiling.

People who are used to saying "Dominion Bureau of Statistics" or "DBS" will find the term "Statistics Canada" rather awkward. I submit it is better to retain the accustomed term and I hope this particular provision will be dropped when the matter is considered in committee. I know that even some government members have doubts about this matter because a four year transitional period is provided. But I, personally, hope that the title "Dominion Bureau of Statistics" will continue indefinitely.

Now, I wish to deal with these other matters, Mr. Speaker, the first being the penalty provision. Fines have been increased and the bill provides that refusal or neglect, just simple neglect to answer any questions or to fill in any returns, results in a fine or imprisonment or both. In view of the fact that the bill lays down that the leaving of the notice at the house of the individual concerned or delivering it by mail to his house or office is sufficient to impose an obligation on the individual or company concerned, I think this is a doubtful proposition. At the present time, as everyone in the House knows, you can never be sure whether the letter you mail will arrive at its destination. You do not know how soon it will get there. In view of the difficulties we have experienced with mail deliveries, I think the proposal to increase fines for neglecting to fill in some of these returns is a very doubtful one. When the bill comes before the committee, the penalty features of it will need to be examined.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The next matter I wish to refer to is the constantly increasing multitude of forms and returns which businesses, and particularly small businesses, are required to file. I have received complaints about this matter for years. I have learned that some comparatively small businesses employ a man who does practically nothing except see that these numerous returns are filed. The Parliamentary Secretary made a good deal of the fact that he hopes to reduce the number of these returns. I hope that can be done. The tendency for years past has been in the opposite direction. I am afraid that unless the number of returns can be reduced, there will be a tendency for more and more information to be required for more and more purposes. In many cases those who fill out these returns are quite convinced that the information they are required to give is useless and serves no practical purpose. This aspect will also need to be considered. We shall need indications that are more definite than any we have had so far to show what means are to be instituted to prevent the continuing increase in the number of forms and returns which businesses, and especially small businesses, have to file.

The next matter I wish to raise is the necessity of protecting the privacy of returns. In other words, I am about to deal with the secrecy feature of the returns. One provision of this bill would allow access to individual income tax returns. That has not been possible before.