

Canadian consumers have the right to full and complete information about the products they buy in both official languages. As consumers we must all be able to make informed and intelligent decisions in the market-place. To do so we need information. We should be able to obtain that information in whichever of Canada's official language we are most comfortable with. The Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act guarantees certain mandatory information. The regulations requiring bilingual labelling ensure that this information is provided in both French and English.

As I said, this system has been working well since the Act was passed in the early 1970s. It is consistent and is familiar to business and industry, both foreign and domestic. Suppliers know what is required of them. They have been providing bilingual labelling information to meet this requirement. In fact, I suggest they would do it as a consumer marketing device even if it were not required.

Why introduce an unnecessary change and uncertainty into a well functioning system? The reason it has been advanced for tinkering is that somehow it has something to do with the free trade agreement. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier wants to advance by hint, implication or innuendo the totally false idea that bilingualism will be affected by the free trade agreement. He does so presumably to undermine the strong and growing support for the free trade agreement as the benefits become known and understood by Canadians.

It is likely that the free trade agreement will be the best thing that ever happened to the Canadian consumer. Tariffs on American consumer goods will be totally phased out when the agreement is fully implemented. Consumers will save significantly as a result. The average consumer will likely save in the order of \$500 per year. It has been suggested by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) that the cost of an entire household of goods, services and appliances could be reduced by as much as \$8,000. Consumers will also save because Canadian-made goods will be cheaper in price as our manufacturers gear up to access the huge American market. Service will also improve the competition, as will the choice and availability of products in the market-place.

Yes, the lot of Canadian consumers will change dramatically under free trade, and change for the better. But one thing that will not change as a result of free trade is the consumers' right to product information on pre-packaged goods in both English and French.

Bilingual labelling, as required by Canadian law, is not affected by the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Despite the arguments that have been suggested here today the Government has gone on record to assure Canadians that those labelling requirements will remain an integral part of our consumer protection regulations.

The Hon. Member who sponsors this Bill has long been a promoter and staunch supporter of bilingualism. In fact, today in the local newspaper, *The Ottawa Citizen*, he was referred to as Mr. Bilingualism. I suggest he has nothing to fear as a

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result of the free trade agreement. If he wishes to further the interests of the Canadian consumer then he should be working to support the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement. However, it seems that he is using his professed ideals of bilingualism as a stalking horse to attack the free trade agreement and to induce confusion. As a result, he does a disservice to the interests of Canadian consumers.

This is an unnecessary piece of legislation that would do nothing to enhance bilingualism and do nothing to improve things for Canadian consumers. I suggest that the Bill be rejected.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I am pleased this afternoon to take part in this discussion on Bill C-280 introduced by our distinguished colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) and which is entitled: An Act to amend the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act (bilingualism).

Madam Speaker, I heard with great interest the speeches made in the House especially by Tory members, although I have also listened to the speech made by our NDP colleague. His comments were quite relevant, but I cannot say the same of those made by Tory members because I do not understand their way of thinking on that Bill.

Madam Speaker, some members maintain today that we should not amend the present legislation because we should not try to fix something that is not broken. It is a rather interesting way of thinking. We could say likewise: "Why did we sign a free trade agreement; our trade relations were surely not broken, so why fix them?" Moreover, I think that the word fix would be somewhat exaggerated under the circumstances since, as we know, the trade deal has almost nothing good to offer Canadians. In fact, the agreement itself will be disruptive instead of fixing things up.

Even those who approve the trade deal, and there are very few, would agree with me that the Government has fixed what was not broken.

Therefore, it seems that this conservative way of thinking, this traditional approach that one must not touch anything, does not apply to the free trade agreement. And it does not apply either to Bill C-280 brought forward by our distinguished colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, I suppose.

Madam Speaker, we are told that the present legislation is adequate since it did work for a number of years. It is a fact that this legislation introduced by a Liberal Government has been on the books for a long time. Besides, it was a good measure introduced by a Liberal Government which I would like to commend for what it did in order to have labelling of consumer products in both official languages in our country.