

Food and Drugs Act

To do what the hon. member suggests in this bill will not completely solve the problem. I think we should also try to do something about foods which are imported and exported. Many foods are brought into Canada. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations is presently working on labelling proposals and I think the Canadian government should continue to support work in this field.

I said that I support this bill and I do. However, I have certain reservations. From my point of view the bill is too lenient. I would have the law be more obligatory with respect to labelling. The wording in the bill says:

—and in any case where it is possible to do so the regulations shall provide that all the ingredients contained in the food and drugs covered by this subsection shall be enumerated on the labels accompanying the said food and drugs.

I would have it a bit stronger than that because of my experience and my personal contacts with people who have had serious problems.

I would also think it important in this country, although this bill may not be the occasion to raise the matter, to oblige our manufacturers to have their labels in English and French so that all Canadian consumers may know what they are buying. I think there are other private bills on the order paper dealing with this aspect of the problem.

Another major criticism is that even if this bill were passed it would not cover many foods sold on the Canadian market. The Food and Drugs Act at present covers certain foods but there are others it does not cover and I would hope that if amendments are to be made all foods, whether they are prepared or convenience foods, would be covered by this type of regulation. I understand that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is preparing legislation along this line. I urge him to take notice of this bill and other similar bills on the order paper. I urge him also to take notice of the arguments which are being put forward this evening, those put forward by the hon. member for Waterloo, my arguments and others which I presume will be made in support of the bill. The minister's parliamentary secretary is in the chamber and I hope he will convey the importance of his measure to the minister.

Some people might suggest that this bill be referred to a parliamentary committee, perhaps the committee on health and welfare. I do not think that is necessary. As I stated earlier, last year the consumers' committee

studied this matter and it became fairly evident that this type of legislation is necessary. I cannot see the point of wasting time studying it once more. I think it is time for action and I would hope that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would introduce legislation very shortly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be short but I would blame myself if I failed to express the appreciation of the Ralliement créditiste to the sponsor of bill C-12, aimed at having dealers and manufacturers use labels with more accurate wordings.

We fully endorse this measure, Mr. Speaker. We believe it is an important means of protecting the consumer, in enabling him to have a better awareness of the products he buys.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is very simple and very precise. I believe the house could pass it without reference to the committee. In my opinion, the committee, which had the matter before it previously, will agree, as the previous speaker mentioned. It seems there will be no objection to a gradual change in the labels, taking into account the costs of such changes.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the retailers, the dealers and the manufacturers would find it profitable to bring about such changes, which would be aimed at improving the quality of the products.

The manufacturers should tell the truth about their products. If they will not say a word about their disadvantages, they could at least state their content.

For example, in the case of cigarettes, the disadvantages of nicotine and tar should be mentioned—and the committee is presently examining this question. But for the moment the problem lies elsewhere.

Our measures should be aimed at solving the basic problem of consumption.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, now that we have a Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, it seems to me that similar measures should be adopted in order to protect the Canadian consumer.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are in favour of this bill on the control of labelling. Indeed, we know very well that it is impossible to get adequate information on the innumerable products that are put on the market. All we know is that every day, when we turn on the radio or the television set, or when we read