

Gasoline Labelling

(Mr. Abbott) and the hon. member for Scarborough West (Mr. Martin), makes me think that he may have something.

The argument that the bill does not go far enough, that there are other ways in which consumers must also be protected, is surely not an argument against taking this step. It seems to me that the least this House should do is to let this bill go to committee where all the points that have been raised today could be examined very carefully. I urge that the Liberal side not talk out this bill sponsored by a Liberal member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Joyal (Maisonneuve-Rosemont): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to make my contribution to the debate which raises a problem that concerns all members of this House even if since the beginning of the debate, government members have been much more eloquent than members opposite.

The first point which I want to make, Madam Speaker, is that the interventions of this government in the publicity field and in the disclosure of information for the benefit of consumers have altered during the past few years. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, the measures more widely discussed among the public have been those meant to include labels and pertinent information in both official languages. It will be remembered that lengthy and acrimonious debates were then held to determine the importance which should be given to the second language when products were sold in a region rather than another.

In spite of everything, the government was convinced that such information was necessary, and the act and regulations which were passed to force producers into labelling their goods in both official languages have proved beneficial for Canada as a whole.

Madam Speaker, there are several kinds of publicity, just as there are several ways of giving the consumer information that is both useful and necessary in his decision to purchase a product. There is obviously what is known as misleading advertising. Such advertising, Madam Speaker, is intended essentially to warp the judgment the consumer must make on an article before he purchases it. There is no need to give any example of those practices. I believe the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission takes legal action every day, that every day it calls producers before it to state clearly what their objectives are with regard to the advertising for this or that product. Madam Speaker, no party in this House, I am sure, would prevent the government from regulating and forbidding that kind of publicity. That is not the purpose of the bill introduced today by the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis).

But there is another kind of publicity, Madam Speaker, which is called dangerous, in that it incites the consumer to buy a product whose use can be dangerous if it is not subject to rules or strict standards. One example that comes to everyone's mind and is most recent in that field is the publicity surrounding tobacco products and specially cigarettes. It has led producers and tobacco producers and distributors to include in their publicity a notice urging consumers to consider the fact that its dangers

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

increase with usage. That publicity is therefore said to be dangerous.

There is another kind of publicity, Madam Speaker, the effects of which have been and continue to be of concern to this House, and that is excessive publicity. That publicity is in itself dangerous. However the message or the information repeated eventually conditions the consumer and makes him believe that if he does not purchase the particular item or does not use it in sufficient quantities, his comfort or well-being will be reduced.

I already mentioned during a meeting of the parliamentary Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs which is now considering Bill C-2, that such advertising should be restricted by that bill. I have in mind particularly the commercials for a provincial lottery which eventually lead the consumer or buyer of a ticket to believe that some day he will win. Of course, if you repeat the message all day long, the consumer will believe that after all if he does not buy a ticket he will never become a millionaire or become wealthy in a jiffy. I believe in that respect Bill C-2 as it now stands should regulate that form of advertising which in my opinion has an unfortunate impact on a more and more frantic society which aims at consuming more and more new products everyday.

That is not the type of excessive advertising the hon. member from Ottawa West wants to draw our attention to. The kind of advertising he would like the House to legislate upon aims at providing consumers with necessary information so that he can make the best decisions when he buys gasoline. I believe, Madam Speaker, that the bill he wants us to pass adds a new dimension to the government's responsibilities with respect to advertising. In fact, it aims at having the government wonder if they should provide consumers with the information required for a wise decision, whatever the cost of displaying that information, or whatever the cost of providing consumers with that kind of information.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that we shall more and more have to wonder about the social role of advertising. Personally, when I am watching TV or listening to the radio, and I hear commercials for certain types of products, I can never be totally satisfied with the fact that, for instance, a banana retailer or any canned product retailer is allowed to advertise his products and that nobody at the same time wonders whether part of the money spent to promote sales of the particular item should not be used to inform consumers on the way he can dispose of waste resulting from the consumption of that product.

For example, if we allow canned food distributors to advertise, I do not see why, on the 60 or 30 or single minute of broadcasting this distributor is going to take, we would not require him to take 15 or 30 seconds to tell the consumer: Here is how you can dispose of the waste produced after consumption. This, Madam Speaker, is one of the aspects of advertising which will probably be the next stage we will have to reach if we really want to protect the consumer.

● (1730)

The information requested in the bill introduced by the hon. member for Ottawa West clearly involves outlandish costs to meet the objective. According to preliminary esti-