

study on food prices—I have forgotten the name of the author—which concluded that one of the causes of high food prices was excessive competition, the excessive number of large food stores in any given area.

These stores were found to be half full at any given time and provided too much floor space, too many people selling and too much merchandise, thereby necessitating a higher price for the products. I mention this point because I think it serves to illustrate that this, like most of the other remarks made by the hon. member to substantiate his amendments, is really unsubstantiated rubbish.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Abbott: He comes before the House and at excessive, wearisome length belabours his points. He brings up instances of his personal shopping habits. He recalls numerous instances in which he has been treated offensively. He takes up the time of the House in this way, and then he asks us to show the good sense which he believes prevails here by taking him seriously when he puts forward amendments. I would simply say that whatever the inherent merit of some of the proposals put forward by the NDP, it is more than offset by the amount of time-consuming drivel offered by hon. members who support them.

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to second the amendment in the name of my hon. friend from Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) concerning false and misleading advertising. I was prompted to do so by the weakness of the existing clauses in the bill having to do with this serious problem.

I listened with interest to the observations of the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott). Like many Liberals, he continues to hide his head in the sand, deriding the idea that misleading advertising presents any particular problem in this country. He and his friends do not listen to what people are saying, nor do they listen to the industry itself. For the information of the hon. member for Mississauga, and others, I intend to quote from a manual issued by the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board, an industry publication which reveals some rather surprising attitudes about advertising and also discloses a number of problems.

● (1720)

The first point I should make is that this industry body which is set up to regulate itself is not known to exist by consumers. Nevertheless, last year alone the Advertising Standards Council received over 1,826 complaints of all sorts about advertising, be it in newspapers, on television, etc., in this country. I was very much involved in the work of the broadcasting committee on the subject of misleading advertising and advertising directed toward children, and this House felt that it was a serious enough problem to pass a recommendation strengthening the broadcasting code on advertising directed at children. Yet the same problem, extended to a greater degree, exists for the adult population of this country.

There is a great deal of misleading and absolutely false advertising in Canada today. Anybody who takes the time to listen to commercials on television or on other media knows what I am talking about. But what is even more amazing is the attitude of many of the people in the

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industry itself. I was struck by a remarkable survey conducted in 1972, which appeared in the Advertising Advisory Board's own publication, of 140 marketing executives. The survey revealed that 50 per cent of the advertising executives who responded to the questionnaire indicated no real concern for truth in advertising. What is even more interesting is that 60 per cent of the respondents believed that their advertising is always truthful, whereas only 18 per cent believed that their leading competitors' advertising is always truthful. So even those in the advertising industry, the people who make up these ads, admit that they do not believe their opponents' ads are telling the truth or are in any way not misleading.

We have put forward a series of amendments that will strengthen this bill, a bill that needs a lot of strengthening since it is proposed by a Liberal government that has not been known for its protection of consumers. I would ask those on the backbenches who are once more groaning to listen closely to the first amendment. We seek to prohibit all representations to the public that contain exaggerated price claims of a general nature unless such claims are fully supported by substantial evidence. As I say, the advertising industry itself admits that a lot of exaggeration regarding price has been going on. For example, we often hear of a product that it is 10 per cent faster or that it produces 10 per cent more power. But 10 per cent more than what? That is never stated.

We also have the same kind of advertising claim regarding price. A certain product has the lowest price in town; that is often claimed to be a truism. But how do we know that? What kind of surveys have been done to back that claim? Where is the proof that the product advertised at the lowest price in town is being sold at the lowest price? Or where do we get proof that the new brand "X" will give us 20 per cent more than some other brand? These are the kinds of examples the bill does not deal with, things that we know are taking place. This is why we are proposing that it be an offence to make exaggerated claims of a general nature.

We are not saying that a manufacturer cannot honestly advertise his products. What we are saying is that if he is going to claim that his product is 10 per cent better, or is the cheapest in town, then he has to prove it. What could be more reasonable or honest for advertisers to comply with than this? We are putting forward a simple, straightforward amendment to cover a situation the minister does not cover in his legislation. I ask, where has the minister been? Has he never watched a television commercial or a newspaper ad that carries this kind of misleading claim?

This is why we say that this bill is a cosmetic one. There are so many areas of weakness, areas containing loopholes, that this bill will fail absolutely to correct. One example of the kind of thing we want to see stopped is exaggerated claims of a general nature that do not give to the consumer any exact or correct information. We are also concerned in a general way about the product itself, what it means to the consumer in terms of price, and how advertising relates to price.

I was intrigued by a program produced by the CTV television network, a documentary on cosmetics and the cosmetics industry in Canada, entitled "The Big Put On". I should like to refer to part of the transcript because I