

Consumer Packing and Labelling Act

affected by this legislation, who want to get into the Canadian market and who are going to be attacking every single item that impedes their free operation in Canada, surely the pressure will develop in the area of regulations.

The Parliamentary Secretary shakes his head vigorously. It is, of course, in his political interest. He has been defending the trade agreement with the United States. It is always a good thing. He has had to talk the government line so much that the blinkers are very tight next to his head.

Mr. McDermid: We are talking bilingualism.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): I am, too. I am speaking about the impact of increased trade—

Mr. McDermid: We are talking about the very foundation of this country. Come on, get serious.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): —the pressure from American producers, their demands, that bilingual packaging is one of the impediments to their activity in Canada.

Mr. McDermid: Nonsense. It is not true.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Given the lack of principle we have seen in the case of the Minister for consumer loss and corporate profit, in his activities on pharmaceutical drug licensing, we have every reason to want to take the regulations under which these things are done in Canada and put them into law. We have every reason to want to make these provisions, which are important to commerce, which are absolutely vital to the purchasing of products by Canadians who are unilingual and French, into law. It is absolutely essential that the products be made available to them in both languages. We want to be sure that that is going to stand forever. The way to do that is to have it in law. This Parliament has to change the legislation, not simply leave it to the regulations and to the activities of the Cabinet.

Mr. Murray Dorin (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address my remarks on Bill C-280 to the underlying premise that has been suggested as presenting a need for the Bill. I want to say that I disagree completely with the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) and his suggestion as to why this Bill should be considered. I also want to take issue with the Member who presented this Bill, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). As has been said previously, Canadian consumers enjoy the benefit of a highly developed system for protection from inferior and unsafe products, and for the provision of information regarding the packaging and labelling of consumer products. These requirements are known as technical regulations.

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Many people consider Canadian technical regulations for consumer information and protection to be among the best in the world, and they are. The present system evolved over 18 years since the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act was first introduced in 1970. In fact, there are some deficiencies

and some voids in that legislation. Bilingual labelling is not one of them.

Earlier on this year I offered my own motion during Private Members' Business regarding consumer labelling. It was Motion No. 86. It dealt with drug labelling and the need for total and complete labelling of all the ingredients in prescription and non-prescription drugs. That motion was debated in the House on August 18, 1987, just about a year ago.

As a result of that motion I appeared before the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare and explained the need for the implementation of my motion. The Minister also appeared. It is likely now that both the industry and the Government will work toward bringing the provisions of my motion forward. I hope to have more to say about that subject one of these days. Notwithstanding some of the voids, such as the one I pointed out regarding the need for complete and total labelling of all the ingredients in a product on the package, with respect to the packaged foods we buy or whether it be prescription or non-prescription drugs which currently do not necessarily include all of the ingredients, our consumer laws are still among the best in the world.

The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier would have us tamper with a system for consumer protection that has been working perfectly well for more than a decade and a half. He does so not to improve the requirements for consumer information but suggests that somehow the requirements that we now have should be rewritten and the format placed in law rather than the technical regulations which outline them.

There is absolutely no need for that to be done. The Hon. Member has introduced a justification that somehow by placing these factors in an Act of Parliament they will not be vulnerable to modification or non-compliance as a result of the recently concluded and soon to be implemented Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. I find it rather strange that the Leader of the Party of the Hon. Member who presents this Bill travels around the nation making speeches about how he will tear up the agreement should he ever become Prime Minister. If we were to take him seriously then we would have to conclude that if we accept the premise of this Bill then the Hon. Member must be suggesting that he has very little confidence that his leader, the Hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Turner), will become Prime Minister. Obviously, if that were to occur there would be no need for this Bill.

There is no need for this Bill because frankly, the present Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act provides the statutory basis for the bilingual labelling of consumer goods. The Act and its regulations quite properly reflect the linguistic requirements of Canada. Most consumer pre-packaged products must display mandatory labelling in both French and English. This is equally true for goods of Canadian and foreign origin.