

● (1710)

An hon. member handed me a note asking if I could relate the problems disclosed by this bill and the points I have raised about textile labelling to his concern about the purity of peanut butter. I see that the hon. member has left the chamber for some important business, so I will not comment on what may have been a frivolous suggestion.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** He has probably gone for a sandwich.

**Mr. Abbott:** Perhaps he has gone for a sandwich. It would certainly be unfair and inappropriate for me to cast away lightly the serious measure being recommended. I am not endeavouring simply to talk this matter out. Like many well-intended measures which have already become law, in some cases I suggest that as consumers we pay a very high price for very little protection, and I think this is an outstanding example of that kind of inappropriate legislation.

**Mr. Alan Martin (Scarborough West):** Madam Speaker, in joining this debate I notice that almost the same bill was debated in the twenty-eighth parliament, some four and a half years ago. From reviewing the debates at that time it seems to me that there was a good deal of sympathy for the concept advanced by the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), that of ensuring that consumers will not be misled at any time by marketing devices.

I would be most anxious to support this bill and see it through the House if I felt for one moment that the consuming public, by the absence of this kind of legislation, would be subject to misleading information which could in fact cost more money by virtue of damaging automobiles, but I do not really think that is the case. I do not think people are being misled because a certain octane number does not appear on gasoline pumps. I am more concerned when I go to a service station wishing to have repair work done on my car, and there is no indication as to the quality of the mechanical work which one can expect from that particular place. I think that this reality is even more serious.

There has been a good deal of literature in the newspapers in recent months and years in connection with so-called rip-offs which take place in various garages and service enterprises dealing with repairs to automobiles. It concerns me that there is no protection for the consumer—such as that which the hon. member is seeking in the area of gasoline, which I do not think is warranted—who drives into one of these repair locations and has no reasonable assurance, in either his own personal experience or by word of mouth, that the kind of repair work he can anticipate for his dollar will be fair and reasonable.

In the case of gasoline it seems to me that the average consumer looks upon the matter very much as one who goes into a new municipality and has his first glass of water. I think it is assumed that the standard of the water in that municipality is a standard satisfactory to the consuming public, and that the standard set by that particular municipality, area or county is up to the standard one might anticipate in other parts of the country. One would not expect to see something written on the tap. One would not expect in a restaurant to have something writ-

### *Gasoline Labelling*

ten on his glass to the effect that the quality of the water was indeed one up to normal, acceptable standards. I think that this is what we have been led to believe in terms of obtaining gas from the average retail outlet.

I sympathize with the hon. member for Ottawa West, and I would be concerned if this could be proven to be the case. If there were a risk of having gasoline put into our cars which would be injurious to motors, then we would have a problem requiring legislation. However, I do not think that this case has been made, and I do not think the hon. member for Ottawa West attempts to make this case.

There is an interesting aspect, however, to which I would like to refer. For many years as an automobile driver I had a real fear of going to retail outlets which were not outlets of the major oil companies. My fear was that the gasoline from one of these outlets would be inferior to gasoline from major oil company outlets. I carried on with this assumption until a neighbour of mine, who happened to be a proprietor of one of these outlets, when I put these concerns to him, said that my fears were shared by a great many automobile drivers, but that they were completely invalid. He proceeded to explain the reason for this. The reason was that he was obtaining his gasoline from exactly the same warehouses as other retail outlets were obtaining their supplies.

Simply because he owned his own trucks and did his own hauling, he was able to obtain his gasoline at a cheaper price and could offer it to the public at a cut rate, which in some cases was as much as ten cents less than the rate charged by the major retail outlets. I have driven some 150,000 miles since that time, and I use those cheaper stations whenever I can in order to save myself that amount of money.

The question is whether the the consuming public has this fear. I think it is an interesting case of protection in reverse. It is a case where, either intentionally or unintentionally, the public has been forewarned through advertising that, in effect, they are not safe unless they go to one of the outlets operated by one of the major oil companies. This is an invalid concern which I do not like the public to have, because the price is cheaper elsewhere. In the case at hand I feel that unless we notice or are advised that gasoline is being sold at retail outlets which is of inferior quality, and when it is marked regular, premium or no lead, does not meet the standard indicated, it seems to me that bringing in special legislation to enforce costly measurements of octane ratings, stampings on pumps and inspections by provincial and federal governments, would be an unwarranted cost which at this time would do no particular service to the consuming public.

There are probably other aspects of this bill to be discussed. If the hon. member for Ottawa West were convinced that there was no possibility of receiving an inferior product which could damage an automobile, I wonder whether he might not be content to let things stand as they are now.

● (1720)

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Madam Speaker, the weight of the attack being levelled against my hon. friend by his friends, the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik), the hon. member for Mississauga