

Standards Council of Canada

and certainly would not know whether you were getting your money's worth. This is true of almost everything we have.

Another example is light bulbs. The Ontario Hydro has set standards to a point where they can buy bulbs with a 400, 500, or 1,000 hour life or even a lifetime bulb. I cannot do this. When I buy a bulb there is nothing to indicate whether it is going to last 400 hours, but I think I have a right to know how long it will last. I am willing to pay a premium for the knowledge. I am even prepared to pay a premium for the government to set a standard to enable me to tell.

I am disappointed with the minister, particularly because of his glee at being able to say that this is voluntary, and that he is not going to interfere in the CSA or with the gas or electrical underwriters. Apparently he is not going to interfere with any of the agencies that, in my opinion, may have been acting in a manner detrimental to consumer prices and to our ability to participate effectively in international trade. I am sure, and I think the minister is, that this bill will have to be amended before it is in operation very long.

I think the minister indicated what might have been one of the defences of his position, had he been able to say that the provinces will not allow the federal government to enforce standards on a national basis. But the indication in the letters received from the provinces by the former minister was that the federal government should go ahead. If this is so, I think we should be willing to exert ourselves and move into a field that apparently is vacant in relation to many commodities.

I know the public is waiting for this type of legislation, waiting for an expansion of it into all consumer requirements. I hope by the time the bill comes to committee, the minister will be able to convince himself or his colleagues to give consideration to this point. The government should give consideration to bringing all those agencies which set standards under the umbrella of a national agency. The organizations could use it and the government would have a responsibility to the consumer for the goods which were examined and approved.

The CSA is really not of much interest to people in China. It might not be of much interest any place else, but it certainly is not an international agency that countries will respect. I think it is time we got into this field, and I hope it can be done by the time this bill gets through committee.

[Mr. Peters.]

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, when introducing the bill, the minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) was justified, of course, in saying that the entire Canadian population wishes that, in some fields, we would comply with certain standards.

However, we are wondering whether the government is acting in a normal way with regard to its standards legislation since there is already—as has been pointed out before—a Canadian Standards Association. If the government intends to establish a Standards Council of Canada whose objectives will be exactly the same as those of this association, the Canadian people will have to decide which standards are the best. Therefore, no standardization could be possible.

Are we going to follow the standards set by the Canadian Standards Association or those of the Standards Council of Canada? It seems to me that, right from the start, a detailed study of this matter should have been made. For instance, have the proposed standards been already carefully considered by the existing association?

In a letter sent to us by the association on March 10, and to which reference was made before, we find the following and I quote:

The yearly budget of the association is about \$4.5 million to which the government contributes in a proportion of about 1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I am not in favour of a pro rata contribution but of a whole contribution. This means that if we allocate thousands of dollars to that association, it is because we consider it satisfactory, otherwise why should we grant it a subsidy. I wonder, since the association is sending a letter of protest to the members, whether this means that the government possibly did not take care to consult this association before introducing Bill C-163. I think that we have here an example of a lack of standardization of the government itself.

This association is either good or not good. I am inclined to think that it is good since it receives a subsidy from the government. If it wants to take charge of standardization in Canada, why did it not resort to the Canadian Standards Association which already exists in order to avoid ambiguity and useless quarrels?

Mr. Pepin: They changed their mind.

Mr. Matte: I did not hear the minister's remark.