

Corporate and Consumer Affairs

the house. However, I do not feel I should let this clause pass without making a few remarks. As my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway pointed out, this, at least to the general public, is one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been brought before this house in a long time. When I look at clause 6 I cannot help feeling that it deals in very vague generalities. I should like to quote subclause (1)(a):

initiate, recommend or undertake programs designed to promote the interests of the Canadian consumer;

What type of programs are to be undertaken? Will they be educational programs or programs designed to enlighten the general public with regard to the quality of goods? I notice that further down in clause 6 it states that the minister does have the authority to undertake research and publish or cause to be published anything in connection with what this research divulges. However, there does not seem to be anything very specific here. This is my complaint in respect of the whole bill, although necessarily I must deal with clause 6. I should like to be a little parochial and ask whether under the authority of this clause someone will look into the situation in northern Ontario to determine why we pay seven cents more for a gallon of gasoline than is paid 100 miles to the south, when the cost of transportation on gasoline is approximately a quarter of a cent a gallon? Is this one of the things on which the minister is going to have some research done? Will these paragraphs be used to expose the methods used in high pressure advertising?

We know, in respect of the various brands of soaps, that if the sale of a particular brand would seem to be falling off the company comes up with another brand which has a special additive. Neither you, Mr. Chairman, nor I nor the people across the country know what this additive is. We do not know whether it contributes anything to the product. This is another place where I believe there should be a good deal of research in order to determine whether these additives contribute anything to the product, or whether they are just another method of "hard sell". Will the ingredients contained in various products be analysed so that a comparison may be made between the quality of the highly advertised products which sell in the stores primarily under a brand name, plus of course the "hard sell" advertising, and the quality of the lesser advertised products? Here as an example I might use a product which is packaged for the various chain

[Mr. Fawcett.]

stores, and which sells under a name used by the chain store, although this product in many cases is manufactured by the same company which manufactures the products which are sold under brand names. These brand name products in many cases sell for considerably more than the product which is sold under the chain store's brand name.

In this connection I should like to mention something which came to my attention a number of years ago. It do not know whether or not this particular consumers research bureau is still in existence, but at one time in the United States various labour organizations participated in providing the funds for a consumers research bureau. It did very extensive work. The ingredients which went into various products were analysed. Tests were made to find out whether one product was actually better than another. I recall very vividly some comments made in respect of some research carried out on soap, as an example. One particular type of soap that was not advertised on the market at all was packaged in a plain brown paper bag, and sold over the counters not only in chain stores but in the small retail stores. When the ingredients of that product were analysed it was found that it contained practically the same ingredients as the highly advertised brands. In addition it was found that there were other substances in this particular brand of soap which made it a better product than the highly advertised product.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I wonder whether the arguments being put forward by the hon. member about soap are relevant to clause 6.

Mr. Fawcett: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I am merely pointing out that this clause deals in generalities and does not specifically point out what kind of research programs will be carried out, how the people will be educated, and so on. Perhaps I might read the second part of this clause:

For the purpose of carrying out his duties and functions under this act, the minister may undertake research into matters to which the powers, duties and functions of the minister extend, cooperate with any or all provinces or with any department or agency of the government of Canada or any organization or person undertaking such research and publish or cause to be published, or assist in the publication of, so much of the results of any such research as the minister deems appropriate and in the public interest.

Here, so far as my argument is concerned, is one of the most important parts of clause 6, because if we are to have something which