

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

minister has made it clear that he will circulate draft regulations at the committee stage of this bill. We have purposely set up the bill in general terms because we want to be flexible. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the best way to be flexible is to incorporate flexibility into the regulations. As long as we can, we want to be open to the new research being done daily and to be open to suggestions from home owner groups across the country so that we can incorporate suggestions into the regulations and thereby improve the bill.

One other thing to which I want to respond concerns a remark made by the hon. member for Regina East who suggested there was some connection between the deliberations of the board of review set up under the Hazardous Products Act and the introduction and presentation of this bill. There is no connection; I want to make that perfectly clear. We are not waiting for the board of review report because we have decided, as a humanitarian gesture, that we must proceed as quickly as possible to assist those who need help the most.

● (1720)

The hon. member for Regina East also accused the government of not consulting. I have already made it clear that we are in the process of consulting with home owners. In fact, we consulted before the bill was introduced. We consulted with the industry and with provincial governments. Unfortunately, neither the industry nor the provincial governments thought the problem was of sufficient merit for them to become involved.

We believe there is a problem for some people—the very young, the very old, those with allergies—and those who are sensitive to gases and associated substances with which they come in contact in their homes. We believe that this bill is a step in the right direction. We would like to have the co-operation of the provinces, but it does not appear to be forthcoming. I suggest to hon. members opposite that there is a saying that the enemy of good is the best. We have a good bill here, and I invite their co-operation to see that it is quickly passed.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member accept a very short question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. de Jong: Is the hon. member aware of an exchange which occurred when we met with the National Research Council before the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates on Thursday, March 18, 1982? At that time I asked Dr. Kerwin, the head of NRC:

Are you at all addressing the long-term problem of devising ways and means in which we can get rid of the urea formaldehyde that is in the walls in an efficient and an inexpensive manner?

Dr. Kerwin answered as follows:

Mr. Chairman, we are not addressing that problem at the moment. The facilities we have are stretched to dealing with the current day-to-day worries and problems—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. If the hon. member has a question, I would ask him to pose it. He is just repeating a question which has already been posed.

Mr. de Jong: Is the hon. member aware that Dr. Kerwin stated that they were not addressing the problem of removing urea formaldehyde from walls because their resources were stretched to the limit and they hoped, if they obtained more resources, that they might be able to address the problem?

Mr. McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that particular incident. As I tried to make clear in my speech, the problem is not removal. The problem is what we should do with the gas from that particular insulation. The best possible solution is to seal the walls. I assure the hon. member that studies are being conducted at the present time to see what is the possible solution in terms of sealing.

Mr. Skelly: I wonder whether the hon. member would accept another brief question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Skelly: The bill is running into some question in its passage at second reading. Would the minister be prepared to give the draft regulations before second reading of the bill is completed? Also, would he be prepared to meet with home owner advisory groups before the bill leaves this place approved in principle? Third, would he agree to meeting with his provincial counterparts so that we can dispense forever with this question of whether they will co-operate or involve themselves in consultations?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, with the permission of the House I should like to answer these three questions.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that at second reading stage we are discussing the principle of the bill. Of course, that is the purpose of second reading. The principle is whether or not we will directly aid home owners who have urea formaldehyde insulation in their homes. If opposition parties agree that we should aid them, then we should send the bill to committee where the methods of helping them will be studied in more detail. Indeed, I will undertake to distribute the regulations and the definition as to how aid will be given to home owners. These regulations will be distributed to members of the committee for study of the bill in committee.

The second question concerned meetings with representatives of home owners. The date has been set for mid-June when they will come to Ottawa for a meeting with officials of my department, with officials of the UFFI centre and with myself. I am looking forward to this meeting for the input of representatives of various home owner associations which have formed across Canada.

The government wants to help home owners and it wants to have the input of the various heads of these groups which