

*Food and Drugs Act*

attempting to talk out a bill introduced by one of their own hon. friends in these circumstances.

It would appear as though the consultation process between manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers has virtually come to an end. If we are really concerned about consumer protection, the least we can do is refer this bill to the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs to ascertain whether we do in fact have any control over the substances and products mentioned in the bill. It appears to me that the regulations so far issued in connection with detergents and soaps, for example, have not solved the problem. In my view there has not been sufficient consultation between government agencies and manufacturers of the products concerned.

If the intention is to continue importing the vast quantity of toys and other products we are importing now, then the quality of those imports should be strictly supervised. The controls already in existence are sadly lacking. The only conclusion is that the legislation needs revising so that the protection about which we have been talking this afternoon can be provided in a meaningful way as the sponsor of the bill before us intended it should be.

If we continue to import toys and products such as are mentioned in the bill, we should never relax our concern for the safety of consumers in this country. It is not good enough to recite a list of the legislation already in existence, when each of us in the House of Commons realizes that the situation is not in fact under control. This is an argument for extending recognition to a bill which would bring the necessary control provisions under the food and drugs legislation.

I urge hon. members not to talk out this bill but to give it due consideration, realizing that Canadian consumers are entitled to protection and that we are the only people who can refer a bill of this kind to a committee where it can receive proper attention and where recommendations as to the necessary revision of present legislation can originate. I, for one, support this bill and urge the House to let it go to the committee at least. If similar legislation is already in effect, perhaps it would be a good thing to hear from those who are supposed to enforce it, and shake them up a little. They must become more concerned, because the consumers themselves are concerned about this issue and it is up to us to protect the public.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy LeBlanc (Rimouski):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to state my views on the motion proposing that Bill C-39 be read the second time and referred to the Standing committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

The purpose of this bill is very important, for it aims at protecting consumers against the potential hazards of certain products and devices on the market.

Here is an excerpt of the bill in question:

At present the Food and Drugs Act protects consumers by making it an offence punishable by fine and prison to sell haz-

[Mr. Skoberg.]

ardous substances and to use fraudulent advertising and sales promotion with respect to foods, drugs, cosmetics and devices. This bill would extend that protection to include these additional consumer products:

- (a) Soaps, detergents, and cleaners.
- (b) Fabrics and cloth.
- (c) Paints, dyes and tints.
- (d) Mechanical household appliances.

Let me give an example showing the importance of protecting people from some hazardous products.

One lady came to see me recently and expressed her opinion on some bills that were being considered by the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. She insisted on the importance of passing legislation to provide that the chemical formula of detergents be indicated on the containers. She told me that her four-year-old daughter had drunk detergent from the container. The mother had been very much worried, of course, not knowing what to do to help her daughter. There were no indications on the container; she did not know what toxic substances were contained in the detergent, and she had much difficulty in reaching a doctor, and finding a hospital that was equipped to handle such cases.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Had the ingredients of this detergent been listed on the container, with an indication of the proper antidote, perhaps she might have had less reason to worry and could have given her children the proper care much sooner.

I wish to congratulate the mover of this proposal for having once again emphasized this problem and for having introduced a bill which in my opinion is primarily designed to provide the general public with adequate information on such an important matter. However, it does not seem to me that this bill would add very much to the existing law.

Until now, a good number of measures have been taken in this field by the government, its agencies and the provinces. The cabinet or the Governor in Council can very easily correct this legislation by bringing in the necessary amendments, which would be very simple.

We are all aware that the present era of scientific developments has rendered great services to the consumer in putting at his disposal all kinds of products, the use of which may favourably influence his health, and his welfare in general. This is the good aspect of scientific and technological development in our age.

However, as it is often said, there are two sides to every issue. This constant evolution, this progress does not go without some danger. The products now at our disposal, drugs, cosmetics, domestic products, tools, medical equipment or any other devices, all these things in general result from scientific principles which brought about the use of more active products and improved, more powerful and efficient devices. It is unavoidable that the increased use of these products and devices should involve for the user a certain danger. He has to