

*Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act*

on its use. In April, 1981, the Government of Canada made the ban on the use of UFFI permanent.

Following the ban, on June 11, 1981, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs announced the establishment of an information-co-ordination centre to solicit and register public complaints on UFFI. On the same day the minister announced a board of review pursuant to the Hazardous Products Act to hear submissions from the industry and from other interested parties related to the decision to ban UFFI. Finally, on September 20, 1981 the then parliamentary secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, the hon. member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Joyal), told reporters in Montreal that Treasury Board "has accepted the principle of evaluation damages and of compensating victims".

● (1610)

I do not claim to represent a riding which, with regard to this issue, is unique. I think we all share, to varying degrees, the problems within our ridings which have arisen from the installation of this product by our constituents, with government encouragement and, indeed, financial support in many cases. Surely there is a very strong moral obligation on the government, and I quote the Minister of National Health and Welfare who said, at a press conference in December, 1980: "I feel that, morally, we were the victims as much as the people were of a lack of knowledge".

I do not know how one might interpret that. If the Minister of National Health and Welfare, by claiming to be a victim, was suggesting in some way that she was sharing the impact of the UFFI ban, then one would have to suggest that the minister was using a very unfortunate choice of language. If, however, one might interpret her remarks to the press on that occasion as indicating a very serious responsibility to her fellow Canadians who were the victims of this government's inadequacy, then this response contained in the legislation is hardly enough to resolve the moral problem that she professed on that day.

I said that the problem was not simply an emotional one, nor simply a social one, nor simply an economic one. I certainly do not claim high seniority in this House. I have been here for something less than 10 years, but I suppose that those of us who have been here any length of time have dealt with problems at various times which one could quite accurately classify as emotional problems and they are often very difficult to deal with. Certainly from time to time and under a certain amount of pressure we have dealt with problems which could quite adequately be described as social problems. In the last few years, particularly in the last few months, we have all dealt with problems that can be described, again quite accurately, as economic. However, I do not recall a challenge or a problem in the few years I have been in the House which has so dramatically combined all the emotional, social and economic elements.

I have read news reports and I have heard it said that the victims of the UFFI disaster were simply reacting emotionally. Well, of course they were reacting emotionally; it would be a natural reaction. I have heard other observers say that the

socio-medical problem was more a problem of the imagination of the users of UFFI than genuine physiological problems. Well, I do not care one wit whether that problem is real in a physiological sense or is simply a medical problem of a psychological nature, because one can be every bit as serious as the other. I would find it hard to find a colleague in the House who would not agree with me if I advanced the proposition that very often the perceived problem on a certain issue is every bit as important and often harder to resolve than the real problem on a certain issue. Therefore, I cannot say whether a person with UFFI in his home who can be diagnosed as having a physiological problem, whether it be akin to an allergy or some form of respiratory problem which can be diagnosed as a particular disease, is in any poorer health than the victim of this foam insulation who is suffering serious mental health.

I have heard other critics and observers say that the economic problem is not nearly as serious as UFFI users are making it out to be, and that if one took masking tape and put it around light switches and that type of thing, then it would resolve the test level and those home owners should be quite able to sell or mortgage their homes on the same basis as a home without the insulation. That is nonsense. It is simply not a fact. Therefore, we have a group which is very small in relation to the total population but which, in terms of the number of users of UFFI, is very significant. On the basis of government advice and in many cases on the basis of government subsidy, these people are now the victims of an emotional, social and economic disaster.

Bill C-109 is the government's response. To repeat what I said earlier, if it is simply the first step, that is fine. I will work happily, enthusiastically and energetically with the government on its second, third, fourth and fifth steps. But if it is the total reaction of the government to this problem, if this is the end of it, it is not good enough.

I am happy to see the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) in the House. I know of his problems. As a cabinet minister I had the experience of going to the Treasury Board and I know what the President of the Treasury Board faces. But I must suggest to him, through you, Mr. Speaker, that this is an absolutely unique situation and it must be dealt with in that way. Sir, if you put yourself in the place of a home owner with UFFI, I think you would have an appreciation of the frustration, anger and sorrow that these people feel. In my riding there is a very active home owners group composed of people from all age groups and all income sectors. It is a very representative group of my constituency. When I last met with them, I found them to be dreadfully disturbed, not just by the fact that they were the victims, but also by the inadequacy and uncertainty with which they perceived government to be dealing with them. For example, one home owner asked me this question during that meeting: "Having removed my foam insulation, am I entitled to apply for another CHIP grant to replace it with acceptable insulation?" Immediately upon returning to Ottawa following that occasion, I wrote to the minister that this question was asked of me. I did this many