

Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act

which was just deferred and would come before the one mentioned by the hon. member.

Mr. Basford: Your Honour, it appears to me that these two amendments are closely related. Perhaps the House would agree to deal with both of them together.

Mrs. MacInnis: Would it be in accordance with the wish of the House that we discuss the two amendments together? They stand or fall together. It would save a good deal of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House is agreeable, amendments Nos. 3 and 4 will be debated together, and if a vote is required the two amendments will be voted on in the one vote. Is that the understanding?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the first amendment is to empower the minister to require that the conditions of storage and maintenance of certain products be printed on the package along with the dates upon which they might not be sold for consumption or should not be used. The purpose of the second amendment is to prohibit dealers from not following the instructions the minister has required to be placed on the labels. The basic argument for doing this is obvious. Many stores do not enjoy good inventory management, so some products remain on the shelves beyond their useful or safe life. Perishable products come into this category, and I understand that certain photographic products have a limited useful life.

This provision is to make sure that the consumer has the right to receive certain goods in proper condition. We heard a lot of evidence on this aspect in committee. I was particularly impressed by the evidence given in connection with frozen foods. You can buy frozen foods in a store. We were told by some of the manufacturers that although there are regulations making them keep the temperature at a certain figure, there is nothing to compel retail establishments to ensure that safe temperatures are maintained.

Many housewives have not much notion of what temperatures they should maintain when they get frozen articles home; they do not know whether they should keep them in the freezer compartment of the refrigerator or whether it is sufficient to keep them in the ordinary compartments. We think it is important that when frozen or perishable foods reach the store the consumer knows that they have been kept at safe temperatures and that they have been stored in the proper manner.

Some time ago, the minister will remember, there was an incident in Vancouver involving frozen chickens. There was every evidence that these chickens had been allowed to thaw out in the store and had then been refrozen. This is a very dangerous practice, quite apart from the aesthetic value of the product when you buy it, and housewives are justified in their concern.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

● (9:20 p.m.)

We feel that regulations should be passed providing that there be printed on the product the date beyond which the product should not be sold, as well as showing at what temperature the product should be stored in order to keep it in good condition. We were told by one consumers' association representative from the province of Quebec that certain seals that change colour when temperature is lowered beyond the safe point can be affixed to such products.

I know the minister is of the view that the amendment he made in committee looks after this matter. The minister added the word "age" to clause 10 (b)(iii) in the belief that this looked after the problem. However, in our view it does no such thing. As the bill now stands, even though a product had been in a store longer than the date on the package, a dealer could still sell it in spite of the provision in clause 10 (b)(iii). I suggest what we need is not tokenism of this kind but genuine protection.

I have no desire to make a long speech on this amendment. May I simply say that my colleague from Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) brought to the attention of the committee the fact that in Manitoba consumers are greatly concerned about this problem, as they are in British Columbia. In a day when so many foodstuffs are perishable we feel it is very important they should bear some sort of expiry date beyond which they should not be sold. Of course, if they were stamped with the date they were sent from the factory, everybody would rush to buy the freshest product, which would mean the other products in stock would not be sold. But so long as our consumers know that the product is within the expiry date on the package they will have no worries of this kind.

Some members of the official opposition said that they thought this sort of thing was overprotecting the consumer. I do not believe that is so. I believe the consumer has the right to know the exact state and condition of the goods she purchases from the store. She has the right to know that it has been stored in a proper manner, and she has the right to be told how to store it at home until she decides to serve the product to her family. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I suggest we accept both of these amendments.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) has said what I wanted to say, but I disagree with her conclusions. I think the question of age labelling and date stamping of perishable foodstuffs is an important one, but in my view it is already covered by clause 10 of the bill as originally drawn. However, in order to put to rest any difficulty in interpretation that there may have been, as a result of representations from the province of Manitoba that age dating and date coding be covered in the bill we moved an amendment in the committee to clause 10. The pertinent part of the clause reads as follows:

Each label containing a declaration of net quantity of the pre-packaged product to which it is applied shall . . .

(b) in such form and manner and in such circumstances as may be prescribed show . . .