

National Trade Mark and True Labelling Act

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Would the Parliamentary Secretary resume his seat? The Chair realizes that it may be the wish of hon. members that the debate be wider than usual during discussion of this bill, and I am sure all hon. members were pleased that the Chair gave the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell) considerable latitude in his remarks. The Chair would do the same for the Parliamentary Secretary if this were the general feeling of the House. But because of our practices and procedures, it seems to me that we should note the fact on the record if we agree that the debate should range somewhat far from the subject under discussion.

Mr. Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I think this bill is directed to ensuring that consumers have an opportunity of assessing whether they are getting their money's worth when they buy gasoline. The point I was making is that if a year ago the Post Office Department determined that it cost an extra penny to move a 2-ounce letter around Canada it should not be too surprising to learn that the oil companies found it cost an extra seven-tenths of one cent to move an extra 7 pounds of gasoline around, which was the price increase it then announced.

I think all of this really relates to the fact that the retail price of gasoline, excluding taxes, in Toronto, for example has risen 1.7 cents per gallon or 6 per cent during the past 15 years while the general price index in Canada had risen 40 per cent. This factor has generally been overlooked. Gasoline prices have in fact been kept down very well by the marketing practices of this great industry. I only wanted to make that point in endorsing this bill which will enable the public better to assure itself that it is getting its money's worth when it buys gasoline.

Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I join those who have paid tribute to my good friend from Ottawa for his foresight in introducing the measure that is before the House. Like one of the previous speakers, I reiterate that octane rating in gasoline is obviously not the whole story. It is a technical term that is used by the refiners, but with regard to the performance of the automobile the octane rating does not count very much.

• (4:20 p.m.)

However, I would say to my friend who moved this motion that I have driven a great number of miles and have never experienced any difficulty with gasoline purchased in any province of the Dominion of Canada. I have not had that experience anywhere else. I do not ever recall receiving bad gasoline in Canada. I assure hon. members that I kept my automobile in top shape and, of course, this may be the key. As an earlier speaker said, much of our gasoline contains lead.

An hon. Member: You cannot get the lead out.

[Mr. Mahoney.]

Mr. McCutcheon: Yes. And some even have perfume added. I suggest that our gas expert from British Columbia should take into consideration the fact that people often get into difficulty through buying aged fuel. Sometimes the refineries overproduce and are left with large volumes of first-class fuel. When it becomes aged, they sell it to discount outlets. I would therefore recommend to my hon. friend that he stay away from discount gasoline bars and buy only from reputable gas stations.

An hon. Member: But he is a real cheapskate.

Mr. McCutcheon: I commend the suggestion of an analysis or a test to determine the purity of gasoline. At the moment the weights and measures branch inspects gasoline pumps, but all that that assures us is that when we buy four quarts we get four quarts: there is no real test of the quality of the product. While I am on my feet I would like to say that I take the greatest exception to advertising which uses the low lead content of gasoline as an excuse to raise the price. I do not think that my hon. friend included that matter in his motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCutcheon: I think that automobile manufacturers intend to go a long way toward correcting the problem to which my hon. friend referred. Most of the 1971 cars do not require premium fuel, as do the 1969 models. If you take a high-compression motor which requires premium fuel to a discount gas bar and get No. 2 gasoline, you are not likely to get good performance. With this brief interjection, Mr. Speaker, I hope this matter can immediately come to the vote. I do not want to hold it up because I think it is an extremely worth-while proposition.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask a question. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon) has spoken of ancient, or old, gas. Stemming from that would he agree with the old saying, "There is no fuel like an 'oil fuel' "?

An hon. Member: Correct your blues.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to unduly delay discussions on this bill and its referral to the appropriate committee.

I am always a trifle surprised to hear people talk about octane, octane rating, information to octane consumers and yet nobody could come up with a definition. It would have been extremely important that members enlighten us on the matter.

I have some smattering of chemistry which the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) could perhaps complete since he is an authority on the subject.