

Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act

Canada. I am grateful to them for their representations over the years in the field of packaging and labelling. I have also been influenced and guided by the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Consumer Credit on which Senator Croll and I served as co-chairmen and by the more recent report of the Batten commission on the cost of living and inflation in the three Prairie provinces. I wish to quote from the interim report of the joint parliamentary committee which was published on December 20, 1966. The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis), who was very active on that committee, will remember this observation which the committee included in the interim report:

Product information must be provided. Consumers must be informed about physical properties of products they are buying such as weight, volume, quality and number of units and this information should be immediately available at the time of purchase and should be expressed clearly and unequivocally . . .

It is essential for the government to take all measures within its power to foster the welfare of the consumer. In particular, the government has a responsibility for protecting the consumer against all forms of exploitation.

I believe that the essential recommendations of that committee, in so far as they apply to packaging and labelling, are met by the consumer packaging and labelling bill. If I may, I would refer to another source of information and inspiration for this bill. The criticisms of the Batten report in the field of packaging and labelling are summarized as follows:

In the area of labelling this commission has found that present practices fall short of consumer requirements in a number of important ways. First, even where legislation applies, it is not consistent between products. In effect, it contributes little

more than voluntary standards would. Second, the commission has found that many manufacturers hold the belief, and act on it, that consumers do not want accurate, or even any, technical information about many of the products they buy. Third, information is presented in different ways about different products to such an extent that what there is cannot be effectively compared. This is especially true of heavy appliances but prevails everywhere. Fourth, some product lines provide the consumer almost no information at the point of sale. Textiles are particularly to be noted in this regard but other lines have been called as strongly to the commission's attention.

The textile labelling bill which we passed last session will, of course, correct that situation.

Fifth, some packagings carry labels which are actually depictive of things which are only somewhat like the product, but are not exactly the product inside.

That is, the pictures on the packages and labels are not descriptive of what is inside; they are deceptive.

Sixth, many labels continue to carry terms which purport to be descriptive of contents, such as "jumbo", "giant", and so on, but which are not. All of these defects persist despite the widely acknowledged view by manufacturers that "the package is a salesman" of which the label is a critical part".

May I call it ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, there might be disposition on the part of the House to allow the minister to conclude his remarks if he can do so in the next ten minutes.

Some hon. Members: Ten o'clock.

At ten o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.