

Non-Smokers' Health Act

be avoided at this time. Such actions would be premature and disruptive to the harmonious resolution of this issue which is already underway.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on the Bill before the House today, Bill C-204 presented by Ms. McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood), the purpose of which is to control smoking in the workplace—I will run through this fairly quickly—to add tobacco and tobacco products to the list of products under Part 2 of the schedule to the Hazardous Products Act, and also to ban smoking from the workplace and from public transportation.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I have to say that I am a reformed smoker. Those are probably the worst, but the fact remains it has been nearly seven or eight years since I touched the noxious weed, and I certainly feel a lot happier and I think a lot healthier. I stopped smoking for the simple reason I thought it was a filthy and unhealthy habit. It made me take more trips to the cleaners than I would have liked and made me cough occasionally, and since I had been an asthma sufferer for years, I finally decided that enough was enough. I quit just like that, and it wasn't too hard. I would encourage all Hon. Members in this House who persist in this unfortunate habit to try and make the effort. It is possible, it isn't so hard and it is better for your health and your bank account.

I wanted to say that what makes this Bill particularly interesting is that even when I was a smoker, I did not like being in a closed space like a plane or an office and have to put up with cigarette and tobacco smoke. I smoked very rarely in such places, and I found it annoying when others did. So that doesn't make me one of your hard-core smokers, but in any case, I realized that I was getting sinus trouble and all kinds of health problems and that it was not exactly a healthy habit.

There are a number of experiences in life that have a lasting impact, and one of the things that surprised me in my political career was the reaction of Canadians to the urea formaldehyde issue. Members will recall when insulation was the thing to save energy and keep our homes warm. The Government had been campaigning vigorously for home insulation, and there was one product called urea formaldehyde that was very popular for this purpose. A few years later, it was found that urea formaldehyde produced dangerous gases. Then everybody wanted to get rid of it.

Madam Speaker, I was told that smoking a single cigarette in a house is as bad as all the gases produced by urea formaldehyde. That made me stop and think, and I said to myself: If urea formaldehyde is bad, and just one cigarette is as bad as urea formaldehyde, we must be crazy to go on smoking while we are spending millions of dollars on getting rid of urea formaldehyde, as we did at the time. But why do we continue to smoke in enclosed spaces? This really struck me because I was then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Urban Affairs and I had to try to sell the idea of home insulation while telling people: Listen, urea formaldehyde is hazardous. But at the same time people had forgotten that smoking was hazardous as well.

I think the consideration of this Bill has been a rewarding experience and that, at least in principle, it is a constructive measure to restrict smoking in enclosed spaces. I am told—and I have no reason to doubt it—that it is impossible to recycle all the air aboard aircraft. Although there are places or areas, seats reserved for smokers, non-smokers eventually have to breathe the same air since the same atmosphere and same poisons are recycled. And that is bad.

Not long ago I read a newspaper article about the fact that in the United States it is illegal to smoke aboard carriers of fewer than 30 passengers. Well, if it is illegal to smoke aboard a public carrier of fewer than 30 passengers—and that is the American law—for heaven's sake, why do we not have this kind of legislation in Canada and adopt restrictive measures concerning smoking in enclosed spaces?

I also want to say that the example given by adults to children is cause for concern. I know that children like to identify with some of the things done by adults, not necessarily good things, and with respect to current television programming one might be led to think that smoking a cigarette projects a macho image and looks nice, but this is wrong.

The same applies to the publicity for beer and alcohol. Advertisers should not try to appeal to young people by telling them that it is "in" to smoke and to drink, that it will make life more enjoyable for them. It is simply not true.

I know that smoking has increased recently among young people. I can sincerely tell you that this worries me.

I also believe that the Government is contradicting itself on the whole tobacco issue. I have here a release of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents over 150,000 public servants the Government to use its power, asking to ban smoking in the workplace.

On the other hand, last October 27, the Federal Court of Appeal, in the case of Peter Wilson, which dealt with hazardous substances such as tobacco, gave a majority ruling which I find hard to understand. According to this ruling, the regulations on hazardous substances did not apply to tobacco smoke in the workplace. This reflects a lack of consistency in the Government policy on smoking in the workplace.

The Treasury Board has appealed this ruling, but I wanted to raise this issue because I know quite well that, in certain Government agencies, such as the Department of Health and the Public Service Commission, which I visited recently, there are areas reserved for smokers. I have been told that it is difficult to extend this to the whole Public Service and to set aside special areas for those who want to smoke. All sorts of reasons are given including the so-called smokers' rights. But I have the right to breathe clean air. Economic points are also raised. Well, I will tell the Government and all those who come up with this argument that according to my information, it costs \$6 billion in health care to fight the effects of smoking, while the tobacco industry brings in only \$3 billion in revenues. Therefore, in monetary terms the disadvantages of tobacco smoking outweigh the advantages on a 2 to 1 ratio. Madam Speaker, I feel this simply does not make sense from an economic point of view.