

Health and the Environment

Although there are literally millions of organic compounds with undertermined potential for harm, benzene is known to damage the liver, phenols have corrosive properties and alpha benz pyrene is believed to cause cancer, said Mr. Robert Ouellet, head of the Mitre Corporation, a Washington-based environmental assessment agency.

The compounds, 80 per cent of which are unavailable to the public and are only used industrially, are already entering the food chain from pesticide residues, he said.

On October 2, 1974, the *Globe and Mail* wrote an editorial dealing with promises made by the Liberal Party during the recent election campaign. One of those promises was to stem the despoliation of our planet and return our water, air and land to a more natural state. The editorial had this to say:

An environment contaminants act died on the order paper with the last parliament but environment minister Jeanne Sauvé has said the new legislation will be similar... The controls will be on known contaminants. The legislation is expected to require manufacturers and importers to conduct tests on dangerous substances and report results to the government. The government may conduct its own tests.

The *Globe and Mail* is a fairly reputable newspaper and no doubt whoever wrote that editorial had read the press releases. The article stated that the legislation required manufacturers to conduct tests of dangerous substances and to report to the government. I say, again, that this will not happen until the government suspects there is something wrong. That is the substantial defect in the act. However, there is another defect. Throughout the bill reference is made to a schedule which is to be set up in due course to indicate which are the prohibited substances. The difficulty here is that the bill lacks any operative clause under which such a schedule could be set up. This is not a matter which I am drawing to the attention of the House only this evening; in my remarks on this bill on April 24, as reported at page 1731 of *Hansard*, I said:

Another aspect of the bill merits consideration. May I draw to the attention of hon. members clause 5(2) which reads in part...

It is not clause 5(2) in the bill before us, but the effect is the same. What it said is that the substances will be placed on a schedule, but nowhere in the bill is there an operative clause designed to set up such a schedule. I think this is a matter which could be corrected without any great difficulty, but unless it is corrected we cannot establish a schedule on which the substances considered dangerous to the environment could be placed. I do not point this out in a pejorative way; it is merely something which needs to be tidied up.

The points I have raised tonight are not new to the government. They were raised in the debate on April 24 in which I stated the following. I quote from *Hansard* of that date:

I am somewhat concerned about the way the bill has been drafted. It puts the onus on the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) or on the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) to approach industry, but only when one of those ministers suspects, or has reason to suspect or believe, that a dangerous substance within the meaning of the act is being manufactured or used. The bill does not require the manufacturer or the inventor of the substance to give notice to the government of its manufacture or invention, or of its sale. I wonder whether this omission is the result of an oversight on the part of those who drafted the bill, or whether there is a substantive reason for drafting the bill this way. We shall need to examine that aspect in committee.

[Mr. Fraser.]

● (2110)

Some months ago this matter was brought to the attention of the government. A new bill has been brought forth which, by the government's own admission, is substantially the same as the previous one. There are some amendments with some tightening up, but the substance of the bill has not changed and the defects are still there.

This party was quite prepared to allow the bill to go through second reading and into the committee last April. We then had a minority government and many of my colleagues and some, I would suspect, on the government side of the House, were very confident that amendments could be brought forward in committee—because the government did not control committees during the last parliament—which would make the substantive change in this bill which I hope I have illustrated is so important. We let it go through. But we are now in a majority parliament and we on this side, as well as members on the other side, cannot be sure of the opportunity of bringing amendments forward in the committee.

I would hope that when and if this bill gets to the committee, the arguments we put forward will be given consideration by government members. I am quite sure there are some government members who will listen to the argument; but there is no certainty now. My position, and the position of my party, is that we have every intention of doing everything we can to ensure that this fundamental defect is brought to the attention of all hon. members and is dealt with before there are any votes on this bill in its present form.

As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege, and I think my duty, to move, seconded by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. Holmes):

That all the words after "That" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

Bill C-25 be not now read a second time but that the subject matter thereof, the protection of human health and the environment from the release of substances that contaminate the environment, be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry in order to consider a more appropriate legislative mechanism to establish mandatory procedures whereby substances be reported to the Minister of Health and Welfare and the Minister of the Environment prior to manufacture or sale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Perhaps I should say to the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) and to the House that the Chair has some question about the validity of the amendment that has been proposed. I would suggest, therefore, that, without prejudice to the decision, the Chair will reserve judgment on the acceptability of this amendment from a procedural point of view. If that is acceptable to the hon. member and to the House, the debate will be allowed to continue and a decision will be made at a later time this evening or at the earliest opportunity. Is that agreed?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, in so far as my party is concerned, that is agreed. I understand the situation and I hope all members of the House will agree.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Owing to the events which have occurred these two last days and which do not seem to end