

Explosives Act

storage of explosives under the provincial jurisdiction as well.

Another problem we encounter with the interpretation of 2(h)(i) is that many companies who operate both a quarry where explosives are subject to provincial control, and a construction company, where the explosives are subject to federal control, feel they may transfer explosives from their quarry operation to their various construction sites. We feel that 2(h)(i) is too general and should be amended to "a place at or in a mine or quarry for the storage of explosives for the exclusive use on a mine or quarry in a province in which provision is made by the law of such province for the efficient inspection of explosives stored and used therein".

I may mention that my department controls explosives through the issuing of licences and permits. There are presently 55 manufacturers of explosives located in Canada, over 500 licensed dealers and about 1,500 magazines. Moreover, during 1970, some 800 permits were issued for the importation of explosives of all kinds, and about 400 permits for transportation by road. To perform these duties, the Explosives Division has three regional offices located in Vancouver for B.C. and Yukon, in Calgary for the Prairies and Northwest Territories, and in Halifax for the Atlantic provinces. The Ottawa office is responsible for the general administration of the act and the inspection work in Ontario and Quebec. The present Explosives Act applies to the manufacture, testing, sale, storage, importation and transportation by road and private railways.

The proposed amendments to the Explosives Act do not include any major changes to our present approach to consumer-type explosives. We feel that the present system of being able to deny authorization to any type of explosive that does not meet certain standards is the most effective means of control. We do recognize, however, that public concern has been expressed about sales distribution and transportation of some of the so-called consumer-type explosives in Canada. I shall find it very interesting when the bill reaches the committee to hear some further discussion concerning the extent to which the regime of control over consumer explosives should be changed.

More precise requirements may be made, under the authority of Section 4(f) of the present act, to advise the public of the authorization procedure and where they may obtain information concerning the list of authorized explosives. The act, as it already exists, is extremely flexible in dealing with consumer-type explosives and the above change will make the public more aware of the control being exercised. We do not know of any other country with more effective control or rigid enforcement of this type of explosive than we have in Canada. Many of the consumer-type explosives, which are commonly available in all other western countries, are prohibited in Canada.

For information, the following is a résumé of some of the consumer-type explosives which are not authorized in Canada but which are readily available in the U.S.A., Great Britain, Germany, France, and other countries: First, Cigarette loads or cigarette plugs. These small explosive charges are designed for insertion in cigarettes

or cigars which will cause them to explode after the victim takes a few puffs. Second, exploding matches. These are made up to resemble ordinary book matches and are designed to explode after a certain delay, usually about the time they are in a position to light a cigarette. Third, sparkling matches. These also resemble the normal book matches but send out a shower of sparks. Fourth, tear gas pens and launchers. These resemble a pen and are supposedly for protection against muggers, but are more commonly used as offensive weapons or as practical jokes. Fifth, ammunition for miniature tie clip, cufflink or key chain pistols. This is a violent type of blank ammunition made up for use in a novelty item. Sixth, auto jokers, auto alarms and so on. These are supposedly designed as burglar alarms but are really for a practical joke. When wired to the ignition system of a car they operate with a loud screeching whistle followed by copious emission of smoke and a loud explosion. Seventh, stinks bombs. The name, I believe, is self-explanatory. Eighth, exploding golf balls. These are designed to explode and emit a cloud of smoke on impact. Ninth, Cherry bombs, M-80 Salutes, Silver Salutes, and so on. These are very violent firecrackers which annually cause serious accidents and some deaths in the United States. They are considered far too violent and contain an excessive charge of a composition we prohibit. Tenth, various throw-down or step-on torpedoes, cracking balls, etc. These are small objects designed to explode on impact. Eleventh, all other trick devices or practical jokes which employ an explosive or a pyrotechnic for their effect are prohibited in this country. Also prohibited are all indoor fireworks, except Christmas crackers, all hand-held fireworks, except sparklers, all shop goods fireworks which do not conform to our standards for testing and authorization of fireworks. According to most foreign manufacturers, these specifications are far more stringent than they encounter in their own country or in other western countries.

It is impossible to determine how many accidents we have prevented in Canada with our system of controls, but we venture to say that we have saved many lives, particularly when the record in Canada is compared with the record in the U.S.A. We are aware that because of our restrictions, some of the prohibited items are smuggled into the country, but they are not legal and they are not readily available to the general public.

This gives a general review of the proposed amendments to the act which, as I indicated, have been based primarily on a wish to tighten up the policing and control of industrial explosives and to tidy up certain aspects of the bill from a technical and legal standpoint. I shall look forward to the opportunity of hearing other hon. gentlemen on the question of this bill, and to having a very full discussion of the proposed changes and other comments when in due course it comes before the standing committee.

Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing the minister's remarks. I also appreciate the concern he expressed as well as his intentions, especially when one looks around the world and sees some of the difficulties which arise in respect of explosives. However, I cannot help but think, when we look at a bill such as the one being introduced here, that