

*Hazardous Substances*

renamed it the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. The amendment extended the requirements of the original legislation to cover all hazardous substances, regardless of whether or not they were packaged. It authorized the banning of household substances so hazardous that cautionary labelling was insufficient protection. It extended cautionary labelling requirements to include further warnings and data specifically related to children.

Perhaps, the potentially most significant measure taken in the United States recently in the field of consumer safety was the establishment in 1967 of a National Commission on Product Safety. This body is undertaking a comprehensive study and investigation to determine what type of household products could be considered hazardous, the extent to which self-regulation by industry in the United States affords protection against potential hazards, the protection afforded at common law, and the extent and effectiveness of protection currently afforded by federal, state and local laws.

A list of some 200 household products is now being investigated by this national commission which has invited comments on the safety aspect of these products from all interested parties. When the legislation before this house is passed, as I hope it will be, I expect that the information flowing from this commission in the United States will not only be extremely useful to them but extremely useful to us in Canada in working out regulations under our Hazardous Products Act.

I mention what has happened in other countries, in Britain and the United States, to show that what we are doing in Canada today, and what we are asking parliament to approve, is nothing terribly revolutionary, nothing terribly radical, but is being asked in recognition of the need for parliament to protect the Canadian public against hazardous products, a need that the United Kingdom and the United States recognized some years ago.

We face in our country the same problems as the United States, Britain and other advanced countries where the proliferation and sophistication of consumer products have been accompanied by a corresponding increase of hidden hazards against which the consumer cannot defend himself unaided. We face the same high accident toll and the same complacent assumption by the public that what it buys is safe. Many hon. members who spoke this afternoon recognized this, and in fact some said that this legislation was five or

ten years late. I would agree with them, and for the sake of those who have been killed, maimed or injured in the interval, I would have hoped that we could have had this legislation passed some time previously.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be introducing this legislation this evening. I point out that apart from the specific drug legislation which I introduced some time ago, this is really the first major piece of consumer legislation that this new department of mine has introduced. I think the fact of its being introduced and the fact that hon. members have recognized the need for it shows the wisdom of establishing a department of government on consumer affairs to devote itself to the attention, protection, interests and the welfare of Canadian consumers.

The hon. member for Kitchener (Mr. Hymmen), and a number of other hon. members, gave statistics during the course of the debate relating to accidental poisoning. The hon. member for Kitchener mentioned that in 1966 there were some 35,596 cases of accidental poisoning in Canada. It can be assumed, Mr. Speaker, that many more thousands of poisonings occurred but were not reported. As the hon. member pointed out, the striking factor about these accidental poisonings is that over 70 per cent of them involved children under five years of age. Products involved in the non-drug poisonings ranged from cleaning and polishing agents to fuel and lubricants.

To anyone involved in the field of consumer protection, of safety and of poison centres, it is clear that the major problem lies in keeping children and potentially dangerous substances such as A.S.A. tablets, bleaches or corrosive agents away from each other, except in cases of need and under supervision. Their improper use, mainly ingestion by children, can result in very serious tragedy.

Bill S-26 is designed to provide the authority to deal with substances of a poisonous, toxic, inflammable, explosive or corrosive nature which are hazards to the health or safety of the public. My department also hopes to be able to promote safety standards for consumer goods in co-operation with existing standards setting bodies and the proposed Standards Council of Canada. Such standards could be embodied in the regulations associated with this legislation to provide a basis for prohibiting or controlling hazardous substances and products.

[Mr. Basford.]