

Motor Vehicle Safety Act

The safety regulations include 29 standards for design and performance of passenger cars, trucks, buses, motorcycles and trailers and five standards limiting release of exhaust gases of motor vehicles and 10 applying to snowmobiles. The regulations will be subject to constant review, additions or changes being inserted to keep them up to date and in line with technical progress. The safety standards for tractors and vehicles of that type are now being studied.

Under these regulations, all Canadian motor vehicle manufacturers or dealers must affix the national safety label on any vehicle classified as built after the proclamation date of these regulations. A label attesting that the vehicle meets all federal motor vehicle standards must also be affixed. Vehicles imported for commercial purposes must also bear this conformity label and importers can be authorized to affix it. Canadian manufacturers, dealers and importers may request authorization to affix the national safety label in stipulated places by applying to the Director of the Road and Motor Vehicle Traffic Safety Branch, Department of Transport, Ottawa.

Mr. Jamieson also pointed out that Canadian residents importing vehicles for their personal use must conform to the Act and the Regulations. He stressed that only vehicles manufactured after the proclamation date of the Act and the Regulations must meet all safety standards. Further information on importing vehicles for personal use can be obtained from the Canadian Customs authorities.

• (1730)

[English]

I think the act that was debated at length and passed by this parliament has served its purpose and has been instrumental in introducing a substantial measure of improvement in regulations concerning vehicle safety. We have made a beginning only in this field. Those of the present generation face great challenges; we must improve what has been done.

I commend the hon. member for his bill. I know the matter will not rest here, because the problem the bill raises is fundamental. Even if we were to pass it we would not in my opinion squarely face the problem, a constitutional one, of requiring seat belts to be used. Research will continue in this area. Without question, the value of seat belts has been proven statistically. Accidents still happen in which people strapped in their seats cannot escape from the vehicle and suffer consequently. Although these incidents are rare, they do occur.

As I have said, research will continue and standards with regard to seat belts will need to be improved. More public funds will be required in this area. Without question, we have a major job to do in terms of public authority and regulation in this field.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to say a few words on this extremely interesting bill. Incidentally, I must congratulate my hon. friend from Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Mather) for having introduced this bill and I know very well, in fact I have known him for several years, that he always brought new ideas in the matter of public bills. I think it was a tremendous effort on his part and he is to be commended for that.

As regards tobacco, Mr. Speaker, I believe that he not only broke new ground, but that he was a pioneer for he was among those who had been struggling for years so that legislation on tobacco and smoking would be passed.

[Mr. Francis.]

There is no need for me to give an account of that. We were among the first countries to concern ourselves with this problem and I believe Singapore already passed legislation to that effect. I hope that we shall follow suit before long I shall always support my hon. friend from Surrey-White Rock on those social measures that would be beneficial to most Canadians.

This bill is somewhat in the same vein as those dealing with social security. It has to do with individual safety as regards seat belts. In a rapidly changing world like ours, there is reason to believe that instead of passing measures which are but poultices, it would perhaps be better to have measures passed by provincial government in an attempt to add as much as possible funds to the budget that would be precisely earmarked for the education of the people in safety matters.

We spoke about that while dealing with smoking. We finally concluded that we had to allocate money to education because it seems that all those social security ideas are based above all on the education concept.

We realized, while considering pollution matters, that it is very well to suggest legislation to prevent pollution, but perhaps it would be even better to encourage people to fight it or to grant funds to public schools to have them teach the young people what they should know about pollution, because, basically, whether the matter is the use of birth-control pills or tobacco, divorce or any other aspect of social security, there is a lack of education.

Even if better seat belts were installed in motor vehicles, I suggest that the problem could not be eradicated, for it is a well-known fact that 80 per cent of the accidents in Canada are caused by drinking drivers. Perhaps we can momentarily protect some innocent people, but we should rather focus our attention on the basic problem which, as I say, is education.

Perhaps we should say that there will be some improvement as concerns seat belts, as stated by my colleague from Papineau (Mr. Ouellet). Apparently, North American motor vehicles are equipped with various types of belts that are not provided in European cars. I think that this point should call for an extremely interesting debate, even at the UN, where the discussion could bear on international seat belts. Since recommendations on the standardization of road signs at the international level might be acceptable, I see no reason why a belt of world-wide use could not be accepted after conclusive tests.

• (1740)

Mr. Speaker, one realizes quite often that there is an improvement in the equipment, although manufacturers have presently a very good one at their disposal. I suggest that we could introduce, as I said, a standardized seat belt.

It is not necessary for me to explain that, in particular when the car is a few years old, those safety seat belts are in a very bad shape. When you open the doors of the car, it often seems that a parachute has fallen there and that its strings are intermingled both on the front and on the back seat.

I should even say that those seat belts can even become a dangerous hazard, especially for young children, when they get into the car. They may stumble over them and