

Another part of our amendment reads as follows:

(3) No person shall offer a product for sale to the public that does not have the price per unit clearly indicated on the item or in some other way.

We have seen several instances of this. The Consumers Association of Canada has called on the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to make it illegal to sell any merchandise not marked with a visible price tag. Surely, when the item is advertised or the price is put on the item it should be possible to make a comparison with the price per unit of the same product in another container. Why should it be that when you buy ten ounces of a particular product for \$1.50, which works out at 15 cents an ounce, you find that a 15-ounce package of the same product is marked with a higher price per ounce, even though it is exactly the same product, manufactured by the same company? The only thing that is different is the size of the package.

The matter becomes even more complicated when you get all sizes of packages. For example, we get a can of fluid containing 4.75 fluid ounces, and other cans of the same fluid containing 4.50 fluid ounces. I mentioned before that there were 17 sizes of cereals, 11 sizes of crackers, 7 sizes of pasta, 8 sizes of processed meat, 7 sizes of frozen vegetables and 6 sizes of instant coffee. One can imagine the problems with which the consumer will be faced if we do not try to standardize our procedures of marketing products so that the consumer can have the benefit of the best possible price.

● (1620)

Surely, if we were to standardize packages and place on them the price per unit, the consumer would be able to go into that jungle and compare prices in an intelligent and knowledgeable way. One can only assume that the reasons for these various sizes and for the absence of unit pricing is to confuse the purchaser and to obfuscate the issue and, as a result, rip off the consumer. Surely, to ask that kind of protection in a consumer bill is not an unreasonable request.

Another part of the amendment we have proposed is that no person shall offer a product for sale to the public which, in terms of price, exceeds per unit the price at which smaller quantities of the same product are offered by the same person. It seems to me that I covered that matter in my previous remarks. This part of the amendment attempts to bring some kind of order into the marketplace so that the consumer can benefit from that kind of system.

Another part of our amendment proposes that no person shall offer a product to the public for sale at a price which does not actually reflect the intended consequences of any government subsidy program then in effect with respect to that particular product. In the past there have been many examples of subsidies paid—powdered milk is one—where the government, in order to keep down the price to the consumer, offered to the manufacturer a subsidy on a particular product; and lo and behold, it was found that the consumer was not receiving the benefit of the subsidy. We found the price was steadily rising in spite of the fact that the manufacturer or processor was receiving a subsidy on the product.

Combines Investigation Act

Surely, it is not unreasonable to ask that a bill to protect consumers should make it illegal for any processor or manufacturer not to pass on the subsidy which he receives from the people of Canada for that specific purpose. If it is not passed on, surely it ought to be an offence against the people of Canada because it is taking money under false pretences. I also point out that we have never provided any machinery whereby a consumer who has been ripped off as a result of predatory practices can be reimbursed. However, we will have an amendment later which will try to correct that situation.

We have also included in this part of our amendment the provision that no person who offers a product for sale to the public shall distribute, or offer to distribute, coupons or stamps of any kind that are redeemable for cash, gifts, or any other consideration. We return to another very prevalent practice in this country, that is, the practice of handing out coupons or Gold Bond stamps for the purchase of food or other products.

My colleague, the hon. member for Northwest Territories, pointed out earlier that nothing is given for nothing: if you are receiving something, you have to pay for it. The practice of giving Gold Bond stamps and coupons is one for which the consumer pays; the cost is added to the price of the products. The company does not take a lower profit margin. Someone has to pay for the advertising of that program; someone has to pay for the gifts or prizes which are handed out. If a company is prepared to have that kind of program, instead of using money for the printing of coupons and for gifts it should use it to reduce prices.

Canadian Tire is a prime example of this kind of thing. If one buys \$60 worth of goods, Canadian Tire is prepared to give \$6 in coupons. If Canadian Tire is prepared to give \$6 in coupons, it ought to be prepared to reduce the purchase price by 10 per cent. But no, the purpose is to have customers come back and spend more money there. Of course, this is discriminatory in respect of people who live in rural areas and do not often go to large urban centres where they can buy regularly from Canadian Tire stores. They may go once and not return. The point is that they never have the opportunity to take advantage of the lower price which may accrue to them by turning in the coupons.

Surely, it is not unreasonable to ask companies like Canadian Tire to advertise that they will offer a discount to customers and to indicate how much that discount is and what it is discounted from. Surely, it is not unreasonable to ask them to advertise in an honest and truthful way. Let the consumer know just exactly what he is paying for: that is very important at today's prices.

We are willing and anxious to jump in and control wages, and supposedly we want to control prices. It is not unreasonable to do even better than that and to tell companies how they shall operate when selling products to consumers. I suspect that if we did not have these predatory practices, prices would not be jumping as wildly as they have been and forcing workers to demand more wages, resulting in the kind of war measures act we saw introduced today.

Another part of our proposal deals with punishment for those who disobey this amendment. I would point out that it is not just the New Democratic Party which is advocating this: the Consumers Association of Canada and its