

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

as scientific fact; but the results of these various studies must be available to average physicians and doctors so that they can advise their patients.

What is formaldehyde? How pervasive is it? Where is it found and in what concentration? Formaldehyde is a component of the human body. There is a certain percentage of formaldehyde in every cell of our bodies. Formaldehyde takes part in the chemical reactions of the body and is therefore one of the chemicals which constitutes our individual cells. It is not a foreign agent. It takes part in various chemical reactions in very minute quantities.

Also it is found externally in a number of items. It is found in plywood, chipboard, acrylic carpeting, various carpet binding agents which are quite extensively used in homes at the present time, car exhaust fumes, and also in very high concentrations in tobacco smoke. As I sit between two female members of the House of Commons in the conference room, whose names I shall not indicate, I feel I am in much more danger absorbing smoke from their cigarettes. Each of them is a chain smoker. I feel this is much more hazardous than living in any home with urea formaldehyde foam insulation.

Mr. Tousignant: I certainly agree with you.

Mr. Hudecki: The gentleman to my right agrees with what I am saying. Certainly smoking is a real hazard.

I should like to refer to some statistics. In 1978-79, 28,000 people in Canada died from smoke-related conditions. In the North American continent 150,000 persons per year die from smoking. Yet the number dying from any cancer which could be related to formaldehyde at the moment, and in light of current knowledge, is exactly zero. These statistics must be kept in mind when we deal with people exposed to formaldehyde and to urea formaldehyde foam insulation.

A study was conducted under government supervision concerning the concentration of formaldehyde in homes with this insulation. In fact, some 2,700 homes were studied. The average concentration of formaldehyde in homes with some form of insulation was .049 ppm. For those homes which had only formaldehyde foam, it was .034 ppm. The interesting fact is that one quarter of the homes without any foam insulation had formaldehyde levels much higher than the average foam-insulated house. It is possible to have high levels of formaldehyde above the acceptable level, yet have no formaldehyde insulation whatsoever.

I am not trying to indicate that people do not respond unfavourably to formaldehyde. Our human body is such that practically any one of us may show a most unusual reaction to any chemical. Those of us who expect to have our teeth fixed under local anesthetic or those of us who require minor repairs under local anesthetic are really at hazard and at risk. We may very well show a massive reaction to local anesthetic. Indeed this happens. Many of us have read of instant deaths occurring in the dental chair or in the emergency room. Certainly there are people who are sensitive, and we call them hypersensitive, to formaldehyde. These people are very, very rare. They are

rare enough that they do not justify the problem being publicized as it has been recently. We should not terrify the major portion of our population because there are those among us who react violently to formaldehyde. These people must be diagnosed accurately.

In view of the fact that formaldehyde is so pervasive and is present in so many different areas of the home and in so many commodities in the home, a very careful study must be made to ascertain whether or not sensitivity is due to the insulation or to other causes. If there are other causes, they should be dealt with. If it is related to the home, on the other hand, then appropriate steps must be taken. In some cases the individual should even be moved from the home so that the necessary changes can be made.

• (1600)

It is very difficult to explain why this unfortunate situation has arisen in Canada. Perhaps one of the reasons for this general fear and depression over the situation is that much of the expert information has been blown out of proportion. This information has come from specialists in the field of toxicology, which is the study of different poisons; from the area of clinical ecology, which is the study of the environment; and from many research workers who have accumulated vast amounts of information on this subject. This information should be used constructively so it could cast light on the subject.

I believe that those who are genuinely concerned about this situation should have confidence in the medical practitioners who advise them. Those concerned people should consult with these specialists and have an accurate diagnosis made. Not only do these people who have spent their life in this science understand physical ailments associated with various poisons, but they understand people's personalities and the cause of their depression. They have access to very sophisticated information. Rather than being worried and writing letters to editors, they should be sure that the diagnosis is accurate by having it verified by qualified people. I would suggest to them that they have confidence in their family doctor and consultants. They should rely on the support which is needed in these situations.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting a long time for the government to introduce a fair solution to the UFFI problem. It appears that we are still waiting.

Before I commence my remarks on this bill, I would like to reply to some of the statements made by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Hudecki), who related a number of stories about his constituents not being affected by urea formaldehyde. He did not give us any stories about those who had been affected. It appears that he was attempting to have us believe that urea formaldehyde was good for us. I grew up on a farm many years ago when we used a lot of urea formaldehyde to treat grain. At that time we knew that the fumes from urea formaldehyde could make one ill.