

*Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act*

that is an important provision. We want to make sure that such persons will have a reasonable opportunity to make representations under the regulations. We also want to make sure that the regulations are as practicable as knowledgeable people can make them.

In a bill, Mr. Speaker, designed primarily to help the Canadian consumer make knowledgeable and rational decisions in the market place, there is another feature which is of very great importance and significance. I should like to announce this afternoon the government's position on bilingual labelling. Bilingual labelling should, in my view and in the government's view, Mr. Speaker, as a general practice be mandatory for consumer products, both domestic and imported, which are subject to federal labelling legislation. At the present time the various federal acts which set out packaging and labelling rules are not consistent concerning the use of English or French. Several acts make no reference at all to language; some require that either English or French be used, while a few of the more recent labelling regulations specify that either English or French or both English and French shall be used. The new labelling regulations dealing with hazardous household chemicals, recently issued under the Hazardous Products Act, represent the first general bilingual labelling regulations or legislation at the federal level. There have been for many years requirements under the Food and Drugs Act relating to the use of both languages. These will be broadened and made general.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Already, of course, a large proportion of food and drug products sold in Canada have bilingual labels. Manufacturers of many consumer products, especially of nationally advertised brands, have voluntarily applied bilingual labels to their products. This positive trend will facilitate the proposed program, making the task less formidable.

Over the next couple of years, drug products, foods, cosmetics, patent medicines, pesticides and all consumer products subject to federal labelling rules will progressively have to meet the bilingual labelling requirements. These new regulations will increase the number of products labelled in both languages, and we expect by the end of 1975 that bilingual labelling should, as a general practice, be mandatory at the point of manufacture for consumer products subject to federal labelling legislation.

There will be minor exceptions to the bilingual labelling requirements in certain circumstances where their mandatory application would obviously be impracticable or cause undue hardship. In general, however, most consumer products of both domestic and foreign origin will show the information on their labels in both English and in French by the end of 1975. It is recognized that imports may require special attention to ensure that foreign suppliers are aware of the bilingual requirements. Every effort will be made to encourage the earliest implementation of these new rules for imported products to the five-year target date. An interdepartmental committee will establish guidelines to ensure an orderly and efficient transition to this new policy.

[Mr. Basford.]

I wish to emphasize that what is provided in this bill has been demanded by consumers and consumers spokesmen for many years. This bill is designed to help achieve the demands and requests made to the government for many years. I urge consumers and consumer organizations to express their support for it. In fact, since the bill was made public, I have already had encouraging words of support from consumer organizations and I have told them that they can manifest their support by appearing before the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs when, as I am confident will happen, this bill is referred to that Committee. I urge industry too, to get behind the bill, to give it their constructive support. I am confident that a careful reading of it will show that it is in the interests of that vast majority of honest and conscientious manufacturers who want to serve the consumers, just as it is in the interests of the consumers themselves. I am sure that this bill warrants the support of responsible businessmen. I urge them to continue this responsible support.

I trust that this bill will commend itself to all members of this House and that it will be referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs at an early date where it will receive careful attention.

**Mr. Baldwin:** May I ask the minister a question? I will not be responding to this motion. My question is in connection with the very important announcement made by the minister in respect of the bilingual aspect of labelling prepackaged products. This must not be misunderstood. Does the announcement which the minister has made on behalf of the government indicate the policy by which prepackaged products from abroad or manufactured in Canada will be required by a certain date, under the regulations which the Governor in Council will in due course establish, to have bilingual labels? If not, those who import goods into Canada, sell or advertise them will be subject to an offence and a penalty. One of the penalties is set out in the bill.

**Mr. Basford:** Subject to the exemption which I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that is the general thrust of the policy as announced.

**Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo):** Mr. Speaker, when the minister spoke on November 3, he used the Bible and the Magna Carta to substantiate his position with regard to the bill. Thank God he has not used them today as well as all his other platitudes and comments.

**Mr. Basford:** They are good authorities for legislation.

**Mr. Howe:** This bill is titled an act respecting the packaging, labelling, sale, importation and advertising of prepackaged and certain other products. This is an important bill. It affects the lives of all Canadians in that it relates to what they eat and what they buy on the market. It affects consumers, farmers and manufacturers. It enters into practically every type of business and organization in this country. This is one of the most