

legislation, which I do not think is a sensible position to take. If this legislation is to do its job, obviously some of the legislative arrangements already made will have to be upset. What the legislation is doing in a positive sense, I believe, is placing under the aegis of this act a great deal of other legislation that affects consumers, legislation that is now administered by other departments. In other words, this legislation is going to place an umbrella over consumers in respect of packaging and labelling.

When officials from the Fisheries Council and the Meat Packers' Council were before the committee, I was broadly sympathetic to their view that they had been able to operate satisfactorily for years under existing legislation, and that perhaps we should leave things as they are. But the more I thought about it, the more I came to realize that the present situation was very confusing and upsetting to the consumers, and consequently it was much more sensible to have one piece of umbrella legislation covering all the different aspects of packaging and labelling. I believe that what the consumer wants is simplicity and easily understood legislation, rather than having regulations administered by a multiplicity of departments.

I listened to the explanation given by the minister, and according to what he told us it is not his intention to remove the inspectors presently operating under the legislation and to replace them with others. The minister gave us the assurance that the inspection services of the fisheries department, the meat inspection branch of the Department of Agriculture, and the third department, which for the moment escapes me—

**Mr. Basford:** Health and welfare.

**Mrs MacInnis:** Yes, health and welfare—will continue to operate, though he intends to mesh them in with his own inspectors and to adopt the inspection procedures that are satisfactory to the public, supplementing them where necessary. If that is the case—and the minister assured us that it was—I think it is a very sensible way of proceeding, rather than uprooting the whole system and passing fresh regulations and rules of procedure. Although certain changes will have to be made to mesh the two together, I am prepared to take a chance on the minister's proposals in this regard.

I also think it is not a good idea to worry too much about some of the existing legislation and regulations. The consumers want protection above everything else. They want to know that there is legislation that will protect them. They have not had this protection to date under existing legislation. It is obvious from all the letters and representations received by Box 99 and by members of Parliament that the consumer is not satisfied he has sufficient protection in the market place to prevent him from being deceived. The consumer has made it abundantly clear that new packaging and labelling legislation is required, and it is here that we must begin.

The minister is not taking this step on the spur of the moment; he was told to do it years ago by the prices committee. That committee gave an indication that what

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was needed, first of all, was a department of consumer affairs; and secondly, legislation dealing with the various aspects of consumer affairs. One of those aspects was protection of the consumer in the area of packaging and labelling.

This amendment seeks to remove from the application of the legislation certain consumer products that are not the subject of interprovincial trade. Let me point out that today our consumers are continually on the move, and they want safeguards regardless of where they happen to be living. Since Canadians are travelling more and more, this protection must be universally afforded them; and in this legislation I think the minister has recognized this fact. Therefore, I do not think it would be a good idea to remove certain products from the application of this legislation.

No piece of legislation is better than its regulations, and we have yet to see these regulations. No piece of legislation is better than its enforcement, and we do not know how this bill, when it does become law, will be enforced. But there are certain cases where one just has to take a chance. I am prepared to take a chance on this aspect of the bill because, as I say, I think the consumer wants protection. Prior to this bill coming into force consumers have not had the protection in respect of labelling and packaging they need. I feel that this bill, by its umbrella-like character, will bring together the various products in relation to which consumers need protection. These products will be subjected to the same type of inspection and handling. For this reason I cannot go along with this amendment, much as I sympathize with some of the fears of the hon. member who introduced it.

• (4:50 p.m.)

**Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the last speaker and I welcome her support in opposition to the amendment. I listened to the mover of the amendment with some puzzlement. I really do not understand my friends opposite who criticize me and the department for bringing in consumer practices and legislation which they say are not effective, and then as soon as we bring in effective legislation they move amendments that would completely destroy the effect of that legislation.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame, shame.

**Mr. Basford:** This, of course, would be the effect of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Howe). The effect of his amendment would be to destroy this packaging and labelling bill. The opposition must prefer legislation which is really window dressing. In this government we do not like that kind of legislation. We write legislation that has some teeth in it, such as this bill, and then opposition members get up and move amendments which would remove all those teeth. I listened to them and watched them with a great deal of puzzlement.