

*Hazardous Substances*

for this measure in all corners of the house. It is gratifying to note that this important piece of consumer protection legislation is receiving the support of all parties.

In this legislation we, as parliamentarians and legislators, have recognized our obligation to protect the public against products that are a hazard to health or safety. Products that can predictably injure, maim, sicken or kill must be controlled or banned. The magnitude of this problem in Canada is impressive.

There is, of course, no easy explanation for accidents. Carelessness, faulty equipment, misuse of something through ignorance and human frailty play a large part in causing these mishaps. But a startling number of them can be traced to common everyday household products. The attractive, innocent looking bottle of cleanser or furniture polish which a mother sets down momentarily to answer a phone, becomes a lethal poison for her three year old child. Faulty wiring in a poorly made electrical appliance electrocutes an innocent visitor to a home. A young girl is permanently disfigured by a highly flammable sweater or hair band because of inadvertent exposure to a flaming match or lighter. A couple waterproofing their basement with an unlabelled chemical are burned to death because of its unrecognized explosive characteristics. Children are badly burned by explosive cracker balls which look exactly like cereal or candy but which explode when chewed.

Hon. members in the course of this debate have mentioned other examples of hazardous products. The ones I mention are purely examples of cases on file in my own department, the Department of National Health and Welfare, safety councils across the country, poison control centres and emergency wards in the hospitals of Canada.

I could go on describing the grisly details of injury and death caused by hazardous products, products which looked perfectly innocent to the user and which contained no warning of their potential hazard to health or safety, but I think I have made my point. The question now arises how can we prevent this unnecessary death toll and suffering? Because this is new legislation in Canada, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the record I would like to outline very briefly what a few other countries have done with regard to the problem of hazardous products.

• (9:00 p.m.)

In Britain, a committee on consumer protection was appointed in 1959. As a result of this committee's recommendations the Consumer Protection Act was passed in 1961 giving the Home Secretary, after due consultation—and I might say to the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin)—very wide powers to make regulations as to composition or contents, design, construction, finish or packing for any, and I repeat for any, class of goods, and requiring that they be marked or accompanied by appropriate warnings or instructions. The effect of this act in the United Kingdom was to authorize the compulsory imposition of standards and the provision of information about the goods by means of labelling in the interests of consumer safety.

Regulations made under the British statute, or kept in force by it, so far have concerned fireguards, portable oil heaters, children's cribs, mandatory flame resistant materials for children's clothing, and the safety of toys. Regulations now under preparation and consideration in Britain relate to the toxicity of pencils and crayons, and the colour coding of flexible cords attached to domestic electric appliances. The consumer council in Britain is looking at a number of other appliances to which regulations should apply.

The question of consumer safety has also been the focus of attention in the United States in recent years. Public concern regarding the flammability of clothing, which was a concern mentioned this afternoon by many hon. members, particularly the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Anderson), was roused in the United States in the early 1950's following cases of serious burn injuries to wearers of highly flammable sweaters and cowboy play suits of brushed rayon which had appeared on the market at that time. As a result of these incidents and accidents the Flammable Fabrics Act was passed in 1953 and amended in 1967.

Another major piece of legislation in the United States in the field of consumer safety was the Federal Hazardous Substances Labelling Act of 1960, which introduced for the first time mandatory cautionary labelling of packaged, dangerous household substances such as detergents, waxes, bleaches and paint thinners. But this was a labelling measure only, and furthermore it was confined to hazardous substances that were packaged.

In 1966 the American Congress, recognizing the weakness of that act, amended it and