

Combines Investigation Act

To get back to this amendment, I think it is important for the government to do one of two things: either to deal with misleading advertising, and therefore everyone in society who is subsidizing advertising will at least have some assurance that their money is not being used to rip people off, or we should be given an assurance that if we put the legislation through without amendment the government will use whatever influence it has to see that advertising is removed as a deductible item for income tax purposes.

In that way we can have it one way or the other. We either try to make advertising moral, in which case we are prepared to subsidize it through income tax, or we say we cannot make advertising moral and it is the kind of thing the consumer will simply have to guard against. If the consumer is going to be foolish, at least it will be only the consumer who buys that product who is foolish; it will not be society which has to be foolish and stupid too. We cannot have it both ways, but it seems that this government wants to have it both ways when it does not accept this kind of amendment. What can the government possibly find objectionable in a statement of this kind, that goods shall be sold by definable qualities? No one is asking that goods which cannot be defined be sold by definable qualities, but there are all kinds of goods in our society which can be defined if someone wants to go to the trouble of defining them.

We used to say the same thing about medicines. The drug companies argued for years that they had some magic formula; that some little old lady with a pointed black hat and a cauldron was working in their modern factory putting something into their product. The product was not capable of analysis; it could not be put on the package; it would be altogether wrong to do that. We ran into such a disaster with the drug industry that the government was forced to make it define what it had put into its drugs. The

minute that was done we got generic drugs and we saw that sometimes there was no more than a little bit of soda added. Then there was real competition. People could see there was no magic and that they could go to the grocery store and buy a whole carton of it for a nickel, as against killing their pain for \$5. That has been a very useful exercise. With regard to drugs, I suppose it was a question of life and death and there was some urgency on the part of the government to take measures. In addition, the government was spending more and more on health programs and it became urgent that it find some way of reducing costs in that area.

However, when it comes to the consumer the government feels that he or she does not cost them anything so there is no sense moving in that direction and doing something on behalf of the consumer. Besides, the government feels it would upset too many people in the system and change things too much. If the system has to depend on dishonesty, whether it is dishonesty in advertising or in commercial practices, then it is not worth keeping. That is why we have been opponents of that kind of system.

It is quite clear that the government should accept these amendments, which anyone can see are eminently practical and can be made to work. The government is saying that we cannot say something which cannot be proved. We are saying no more than a court of law would say. You cannot make a statement unless you have evidence to support that statement. That is not so much to ask. If this amendment is not accepted, the only conclusion we on this side can come to is that the government does not want honesty in advertising and that the legislation before us is not worth voting for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

At six o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.