

Standards Council of Canada

of trouble, a lot of which stems from the fact that we do not have proper standards in Canada and that the agencies that have been attaching a tag to the products are not better than the people who produce them.

I am also interested in another aspect of the matter. The minister said he is going to support the association, and he commented on the wonderful work it did. In their letter, the association says that it is privately financed, and that it has an annual budget of about four and a half million dollars to which the federal government contributes only about 1 per cent. These people have been able to raise for themselves four and a half million dollars for doing what? Certainly, not for protecting the public. The 1 per cent which the government put into the organization could have been 50 per cent if they thought that organization would protect the consumers. The minister must think about the Canadian Standards Association because that association, from whom I received the letter dated March 10, either does not believe the minister that the organization proposed under the legislation will not supersede them, or else is pretty stupid. No wonder it does not make better decisions on some of the safety regulations, because if it read the minister's bill as badly as I did then neither of us should set standards for electrical appliances.

A number of articles were written by Maurice Western, a special correspondent for the *Journal* who had some things to say about this matter. His opinion is that, of course, the minister's bill is only the thin end of the wedge. Judging from his argument it seems to me he believes it is a voluntary foot in the door is not opened, then the minister will have some leverage. He gives some reasons as to why this bill is necessary. One of the reasons is to allow the minister to exercise some control. In one of the articles appearing in the *Journal* Western said:

But standards can also be a cloak for extortion. They can be used to impose higher prices on Canadian consumers by keeping off the market goods which have proved safe and serviceable in other countries.

He goes on to give an example:

In Ontario, for example, firms have been prosecuted by provincial authorities because they offered for sale such items as Japanese radios and radio-phonographs which did not carry the approval stamp of a private organization, the Canadian Standards Association.

Until now, Parliament has shown no interest in this anti-consumer aspect of standards regimes. Furthermore, although Mr. Pepin's bill contains a few pious expressions about "facilitating domestic and international trade" and "furthering interna-

tional co-operation in the field of standards", there is nothing in it which promises an effective attack on the problem.

If there are to be standards policed by the provinces, which may indeed be necessary in many cases, they ought not to be set by representatives of private organizations with a market interest. In principle, therefore, an official standards council is a good thing. The one proposed will consist of six civil servants, 10 members nominated by the provinces and not more than 41 other members chosen by the federal government on some basis not spelled out in the bill.

The general idea of the legislation is that the new council will work through existing organizations. It may "accredit, in accordance with criteria and procedures established by the council, organizations engaged in standards formulation, testing and certification in those fields—

Western goes on to say:

Since it will not have its own laboratories, how will it avoid becoming captive to these bodies, including presumably the Canadian Standards Association and Canadian Gas Association? In the past, such groups, although non-government associations, have managed to endow themselves with a semi-official aura. Now they are to be accredited, which will put the matter beyond doubt.

The article goes on to describe the effect this will have on imports and exports and how United States products have been unable to come into Canada because total and often useless changes would be involved. Mention is made in the article of one case, of which I have known for some time, of an electric stove that was brought to Canada. Most of us do not consider the Americans to be backward in their industrial products, yet the wiring in that stove has to be removed and a different type of wiring installed, boosting the price, I would imagine by 10 per cent. What does it do to the cost once a stamp of approval is put on the stove? It boosts the cost of that stove by 100 per cent so the stove, which would be considered acceptable in the United States and which sells for \$100 there, will probably cost \$200 or \$225 in Canada. In addition, there is the bother of having to re-wire it to obtain a stamp of approval, which obviously the Americans do not think was necessary so why should we?

The minister is also aware that often we have not been able to sell in other countries products manufactured in Canada because we have not been able to meet their standards. It has been very interesting, in travelling around parts of the world on a number of occasions, to find that in other countries electrical appliances are uniform in their application. We do not have this uniformity. An electric shaver in Europe operates on current of different voltage. In Canada, electric shavers do not even operate on household current