

*Food and Drugs Act*

If I read the act correctly, it would be quite possible for the Governor in Council to regulate the labelling of any food or drug. In other words, if the officials of the consumer and corporate affairs department or the Department of National Health and Welfare decided a certain product should be labelled with the ingredients of a product, legislation exists by which the Governor in Council could make regulations requiring such labelling. I think this would be a more sophisticated and better way of doing this, rather than by passing legislation which would require, regardless of the problems I have mentioned that all ingredients, of all foods be labelled. I think this would be the better way for the reasons I have outlined. Therefore, while I can appreciate and do approve of the intent of this bill, I do not feel this is the best way of achieving the objectives of its proposer.

Before I leave this subject I should like to say a few words about a related matter. It is my opinion that regulations should be forthcoming which require the manufacturers of patent drugs to list all the ingredients of such a drug. If a child takes a product from a medicine cabinet which is simply labelled as "Dr. 'X's' rheumatism remedy", drinks it and ends up at a hospital or a poison control centre, there is simply no way for the doctor or the pharmacist to discover what is in that product except by analysis. This is obviously a time-consuming process. Of course, an attempt could be made to phone the manufacturer, if it was known who the manufacturer was, but this would be a hit or miss proposition. If the manufacturer involved could be found some information might be obtained, but in the meantime the child may well die.

I feel that it is very important for the Minister of National Health and Welfare and his officials to pay attention to this specific problem. I do not believe legislation is necessary, as regulations could be issued under section 24 of the Act which would require all manufacturers of patent drugs to clearly label their products with all the ingredients and the amounts of those ingredients. I urge the minister to consider this matter.

With these general observations on this subject I once more would like to reiterate that the objective of this bill is excellent, but the bill itself is not necessary. I think this matter could best be handled under the existing legislation, specifically section 24(1) of the Food and Drugs Act.

**Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West):**  
Mr. Speaker, I will just take a moment of the  
[Mr. Anderson.]

time of this house to congratulate the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) for feeling the pulse of the people who are affected by the uncertainty about drugs and food. It is very significant at this time that we find members on both sides of the house referring to bills dealing with this subject. We have heard references to Bill C-56, C-12 and Bill C-119. This seems to indicate there is a problem which we must face. There appears to be a duty not only on parliamentarians but on manufacturers to instruct and inform the ultimate consumer. We have heard how important it is that those who are suffering from allergies be advised as to what they are purchasing and how they can become involved.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I need not reiterate the excellent examples that have been given. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me we are now faced with problems that exist because of the lack of proper or informative labelling. This problem must be faced and resolved. The hon. member who preceded me said that although this bill is good in principle and is an excellent amendment to the Food and Drugs Act, it is not the right way to bring about this improvement. He referred to section 24 (1) of the act and pointed out that under its provisions the Governor in Council is empowered to look into any matter that requires a change in the regulations. It seems to me that we are moving into an area in which all one hears is "Governor in Council."

I do not have an allergy but it appears to me that we have had several splendid examples of members who have said that this type of legislation is momentous and necessary at this time. Therefore, I believe the question is, are we prepared to face reality in this regard? There is a great complexity in the make-up of food and drugs, which calls for honest labelling. For this reason I fully support the hon. member's bill. I believe Canadians desire information in respect of the labelling of food and drugs. This information is extremely necessary today in order that full protection be given to the consumer.

One has only to look at the many patent medicines which are on sale to realize how much difficulty is caused because of the lack of proper labelling. People must have a choice when purchasing these goods. Through proper labelling they have the right of choice for their protection. There is a great deal of interest in the matter and this has been