

requirement of the consumer movement. It is a fundamental axiom of consumerism that consumers ought to be able to exercise a rational choice. In order for consumers to buy conscientiously in the market place, it is necessary that they be provided with full and factual information. This is the second main principle of the bill. This principle is that the consumer shall have available to him full and factual information on labels so that he will have the basis on which to make well informed decisions and well informed and rational choices. This bill provides that all prepackaged products shall bear a quantity declaration, and such declaration shall be in terms of Canadian standard and metric units of weight, volume or length. Count will be permitted where this is the usual practice.

The net quantity declaration of weight, measure or count will appear on the main panel of the package. This declaration shall be easily legible and readily discernible under normal conditions of purchase and the minimum acceptable print size of the declaration will be established by regulation. The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer or distributor will have to be shown on all packages so that the consumer may readily get in touch with him and make any inquiry or complaint. The commodity must also be identified in terms of its common or usual or generic name or in terms of its function.

The third principle, Mr. Speaker, underlying this bill is the prevention of fraud and deception in packaging and labelling, where these occur by way of non-functional slack fill, which is the technical term for the package which does not have as much in it as people may expect, or misleading depictions and vignettes, or deceptive descriptions of the product, by false advertising or in any other way. That is meant to curb actions which tend to deceive or manipulate the consumer. As hon. members can see, the bill will ban a variety of false and misleading representations on labels, including expressions or depictions which create a wrong impression as to content, origin, quality, performance or method of production. It will, for example, be illegal to declare an item hand-made when it is in fact machine-made.

Containers of prepackaged products must not be manufactured, constructed, filled or displayed in such a way that a consumer could reasonably be misled as to quantity or quality of the product. In gauging the contents of a container, consumers should not have to put up with trying to detect whether there are hidden indentations, fillers or just unfilled space other than that which the peculiar qualities of the product require.

The fourth principle of the bill that I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is this: the bill will tackle the question of the undue proliferation of package shapes and sizes which is the source of a great deal of consumer irritation. One of the most annoying things for consumers, and I frequently hear complaints about this, is the almost staggering variety of package shapes and sizes in some product lines. This matter was mentioned before the Parliamentary Committee and the Royal Commission. That makes price comparison and product comparison almost impossible. I have reason to believe that certain manufac-

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turers also consider that this marketing technique of package proliferation has, in some cases, reached ridiculous proportions and that they would welcome some rationalization of package shapes and sizes in some lines of consumer products. The bill provides that where the governor in council is of the opinion that there is undue proliferation in the sizes or shapes of the containers for prepackaged goods, the effect of which is to confuse or mislead the consumer, he may establish regulations to limit the sizes or shapes of such containers. The next provision is important, Mr. Speaker. For the purpose of establishing package requirements, the minister may seek the advice from time to time of the Standards Council of Canada, any organization in Canada engaged in Standards formulation, or any organization of consumers or dealers in the prepackaged product.

Some people, Mr. Speaker, have expressed the concern to me, and I notice that this matter has been referred to in the press, that the effect of this provision of the act will be that the government will interfere unduly with the free market process and will eliminate from the market package sizes which meet a real consumer requirement. I can assure the House that nothing could be further from the truth. I am fully aware that a variety of package sizes is necessary in order to meet the differing requirements of different kinds of households and products. I am also aware that there should be room for innovation in package shapes and sizes, just as there should be in other aspects of the marketing process. We wish to do nothing to prevent or hinder innovation.

I would remind the critics, Mr. Speaker, that a very large number of consumer food products are already packaged in standard sizes under a variety of acts and regulations which have been on the statute books for some time. These regulations have not worked an undue hardship on the manufacturers of those products which are required to meet certain standards under the regulations. For example, the more commonly used canned foods are sold in specified sizes, as is a product such as butter. The standards which have been introduced have not, it seems to me, worked any undue hardship on the free market system, on the producers, or on those who buy or sell butter. All that this section of the act intends to achieve, Mr. Speaker, is a similar degree of rationality in those areas where, quite frankly, the consumer is faced with an extremely confusing and even misleading array of package sizes for certain consumer products, which makes it almost impossible for him to reach any rational decision as to which may be the best buy having regard to his particular need.

In preparing these and all other regulations under the act, Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to consult not just with other government departments with interests in the field of packaging and labelling, but also with associations of consumers and manufacturers and other interested persons. May I point out that this is a very important principle to be considered in legislation of this kind. There is a specific provision in the bill which affords manufacturers, retailers and other people interested in the regulations a reasonable and statutory right to make representations with respect to the regulations. I think