

Hazardous Substances

inconvenient service and totally ridiculous. There is also the issue of strike-breaking and whether a Crown corporation representing Canadians should ever, ever strike-break. I, for one, do not think that it should. I think strike-breaking is something which should be totally outlawed. I think it is something which should never be carried forward by the people who represent, in some sense, all of the Government of Canada.

There is the question too of service. There is no question that the service offered by the Post Office of Canada has deteriorated badly, not because of the workers in the Post Office but because of the management which has messed the institution up and made it something completely different from the institution of which Canadians used to be proud in the days after World War II.

This legislation with its huge fines and harsh attempts to push union leaders out of the roles of leadership in the future, its refusal to go for a mediator first, is an approach which has terrible consequences for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reid): I hate to interrupt the Hon. Member but it being 5 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

● (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS--MOTIONS

[English]

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

ADVISABILITY OF REDUCING LEAD CONTENT IN PAINTS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of reducing the allowable lead content in all consumer paints, particularly those used on products for children, from the existing level of 0.5 per cent to 0.06 per cent.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a motion that has an environmental inspiration, and at the same time it has a health goal. It is intended to protect the health of Canadians from lead, and in a sense it is driven by a comparative study between the lead that we allow in Canada to be used in paints, and the lead that is allowed to be added to paints south of the border.

I will briefly explain the background leading to this resolution. In Canada under the Hazardous Products Act there are regulations which specify how much lead can be used in pigments and in paints that are utilized in the production of furniture and toys used by children and adults. In these regulations a specific limit is set, namely five parts per thousand, as stated in the motion. That is five parts per thousand of the total solids contained in the coating to be applied to the specific item that children play with, or the item used by adults.

The two main pigments that are used in Canada are red lead and lead chromate. By contrast, the permitted quantities in the United States are only six hundred parts per million, which is roughly one-tenth of what is permitted in Canada. In Canada the content of lead in paints that are used commercially and applied to toys and other wooden products that are put into circulation for the market-place is virtually 10 times greater than that permitted in the United States.

Through history and through time it has been well established that lead is far from being a healthy matter. On the contrary, it is a matter that endangers human health. If ingested in certain quantities, it can have some very serious consequences on the mental capacity of human beings.

Therefore, the reason for this motion is to bring to the attention of the House the necessity to change our regulations and make them more restrictive in order that in future the paints to be used in the production of children's equipment, toys, and the like, will contain one-tenth of the lead that is presently permitted.

Let me add that at the present time lead-based compounds are without restriction. I am referring not to paints but only to compounds which are widely used as paint additives. These lead-based compounds also ought to be examined from the point of view of human health, and be regulated to within the same scope and breadth in order to better protect the health of Canadians than we have so far.

Who is at risk in particular may interest you, Mr. Speaker. Particularly at risk are the consumers who are using articles that are covered or coated with such paints, but also consumers and individuals who may be sanding walls of old interiors or exteriors where lead paint has been used, and where large quantities of lead can be inhaled while sanding those old paints. Therefore, it is an operation that must be watched by anyone who is engaged in it and is unaware of the consequences of lead on human health. Also at risk is the tiny consumer, the child in the crib who may be biting at items, toys, the bars of the crib itself which are painted with lead-containing paints, and who innocently and inadvertently may be ingesting some of this lead that is definitely rather dangerous to health.

I welcome the presence in the House today of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). I am sure that he will wish to examine this matter and make representations to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) on the question of lead contained in paint.

For instance, the paint used on children's furniture and toys could be marked as a safe item. There is no doubt about that. But it is important that the Canadian consumer know that it is allowed to contain up to five parts per thousand of lead. Many experts in the field consider this level to be far too high, particularly in relation to children and because of the habit of children to chew on anything that they can get their hands on.

The second threat is one that could be related to the fact that paint does peel and flake off. As I mentioned a moment