

Adjournment Debate

of consumer education provided in this situation, the inadequacy of the information given at the point of purchase and the inadequate instructions concerning disposal.

This is the warning I found on the inside of a model I recently examined, and I quote:

Caution: Radioactive material,
0.9 microcuries Americium 241. Disposal by return to supplier or as directed by the Atomic Energy Control Board, Ottawa.

A notice like this raises as many questions as answers, and I was therefore pleased that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie), in response to my question in the House last week, agreed to cause a review of AECB regulations relating to smoke detectors.

Here are some of the questions I think need answering: First, why are commercial procedures dealing with the use of ionization type detectors more rigorous than in the case of homes? Why must each commercial installation be approved and the facilities licensed?

● (2207)

Second, now that the radiation health protection branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare no longer tests prototypes of home models pending the function being transferred to the Atomic Energy Control Board under new legislation, who is testing models for safety under all conditions?

Third, what tests have been done in Canada with the ionization models, under conditions of fire?

Fourth, what right, if any, does a supplier or retail store have to refuse to accept a detector for disposal if it is returned to the supplier for that purpose? Can the supplier charge the home owner for disposal? What instructions have suppliers been given re disposal procedures?

Fifth, what guidance does AECB, in fact, give home owners who ask for directions for disposal purposes? What is the cost, if any, for disposal through the AECB?

Sixth, where, in fact, are used smoke detectors disposed of in Canada, if and when disposal directions are followed?

Finally, why is the caution sign placed inside the detector case or housing? Should it not be a requirement that the caution be put on the outside so it can be seen at the point of purchase, thus allowing the customer to make a choice among models? Should the caution not also be placed inside—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of responding to the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell), who has shown a great interest in this subject and considerable concern. I am not sure that in the short time I have this evening I will be able to answer all the questions he has put before us. If I cannot cover them all I can assure him that my department will be very pleased to provide the answers to anything that I do not cover this evening.

The inspection, labelling and disposal of ionization-type smoke detectors has been reviewed with the responsible authority, the Atomic Energy Control Board, which regulates these devices under the terms of the Atomic Energy Control Act and regulations as regards prescribed substances. The purpose of the legislation and the board's work is the protection of the health and safety of the public.

The criteria with respect to the minute quantities of radioactive material included in smoke detectors manufactured or imported and sold in Canada cover normal operations as well as abnormal circumstances. A simple example of this is that, in order to minimize the chance of access to the tiny radioactive source they contain, the devices must be resistant to tampering with ordinary household tools. Perhaps that helps to answer one of the hon. member's questions.

Ionization-type smoke detectors are regulated through the AECB's radioisotope licensing process, which ensures that all criteria are met. I realize how little time I have, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps I could go on to say that with regard to labelling a radiation warning label is required to be fixed to the protective housing for the minute radioactive source within this type of smoke detector. This is to indicate to anyone who sees it that penetration of the labelled barrier would result in close proximity to radioactive material. I have been assured that there is no health hazard.

From the point of view of public health and safety there should be no concern whatsoever as there is no significant hazard from AECB approved smoke detectors. However, it may be appropriate that external labelling is worth considering from the standpoint of accurate and fair marketing practices, in the interests of informing the consumer at the point of purchase and at the time of purchase. This would be a matter for consideration by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and was referred to in my answer to the hon. member in the House very recently when I said I would raise this matter with my colleague—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. minister but his allotted time has expired.

INDUSTRY—PLASTICS—SUGGESTION INDUSTRY BE EXEMPTED FROM TARIFF CUTS

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, on December 8 last I asked a question of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner) concerning the GATT negotiations that are currently in progress in Geneva, Switzerland. Specifically, I asked the minister if he would seek an exemption for Canada's plastics industry from the general reduction in tariffs being sought by some GATT member countries.

The minister replied that Canada hopes to deal on a sector basis with non-ferrous metals at the meetings, and he said that that might well include plastics. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer was not good enough. Given the delicate balance in our plastics industry and the fact that time is running out on the GATT talks, we can only trust that it is not