

There is great confusion in the marketplace, but I think some of it is created by the way in which we want to live these days. Twenty or 30 years ago, all the meat was sold in the butcher shop, the groceries in the grocery store and the drugs in the drugstore. Now, we go to the market and see groceries, meat, drugs and clothing all in the same store, so there is reason for consumer confusion.

I realize there are areas in which this bill is an advantage. I refer to the things I have been talking about for so long in this House and in committee with regard to hazardous products. We had a hazardous products bill and I pressed the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) to do his utmost to find a container for hazardous products. Each year in Canada over 50,000 children are poisoned. Some of these children cannot read, so it is important that it be made more difficult for them to get at the bottle of aspirin or pills that is going to be harmful. This is an area where we should be more definite.

In the Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs about a week ago I asked the minister about these containers. He said, "We have sent directives out to the drug companies that they should consider putting pills that might be dangerous to children in these specially capped bottles." I do not think that is good enough. There should be regulations covering this type of thing. We have regulations for a lot of things, and if we are going to protect children we should have regulations covering these containers. I do not think it is enough just to label the package. I do not care what kind of symbol is put on it, a child of three or four years of age does not know what it means. They see mommy or daddy take a pill out of a bottle in the medicine cabinet, so they think that is the thing to do. Next, they climb up, get the bottle and take the pills.

The same situation applies to bleaches. Clause 40 reads:

No person shall sell any soap, detergent, or cleanser that has in it any substance that may cause injury to the health of the user when it is used according to the directions or for such purposes as are customary or usual.

We know that there are bleaches which would be injurious and that is where the difficulty is. A child may drink bleach, feel pain and even die from the effects. The next time the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) brings in this bill, he might include some regulations with regard to hazardous products in order to ensure that these accidents can be prevented.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few brief comments on Bill C-39, to amend the Food and Drugs Act as brought forward by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand). The explanatory note to the bill is rather interesting. It reads:

At present the Food and Drugs Act protects consumers by making it an offence punishable by fine and prison to sell hazardous substances and to use fraudulent advertising and sales promotion with respect to foods, drugs, cosmetics and devices. This bill would extend that protection to include these additional consumer products:

(a) Soaps, detergents and cleaners.

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- (b) Fabrics and cloth.
- (c) Paints, dyes and tints.
- (d) Mechanical household appliances.

The hon. member is to be congratulated on bringing forth this kind of bill which deals with consumer legislation. Certainly, there is a very enlightened section of our society today which is concerned with this subject. It seems to me that as our society goes forward and becomes more sophisticated, regardless of how we may oppose this, people want and expect more protection by the state. They expect protection from bad drugs, dangerous products or dangerous equipment.

This Parliament has been notable for the amount of legislation brought forward in this field. Back in the first session, there was a bill which dealt with reducing the price of drugs and there was the Hazardous Products Act which did many of the things suggested in this bill to cover items that really are not drugs but are found in the home and can be dangerous if improperly used. In the present session of Parliament, there has been the packaging and labelling bill as well as changes to the Weights and Measures Act, and the many other bills which dealt with consumer protection.

The present technological age has brought great benefits to mankind. At the same time, however, man is now faced with a great variety of complex materials including foods, drugs, medical devices, household chemicals, appliances and wearing apparel. The general public is not in a position to assess the hazards associated with the use of many of these products, or to appreciate whether or not they are presented in a fraudulent or misleading manner, so hence must rely, to some considerable extent, upon government bodies for protection.

Bill C-39 proposes that the authority of the Food and Drugs Act, in protecting the consumer, should be extended beyond that of foods, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices to include the items I have mentioned. In speaking to Bill C-39, perhaps it would be desirable, at the outset, to comment briefly upon the matters presently contained in the Food and Drugs Act. The Food and Drugs Act is a consumers' act intended to protect the consumer from health hazards and fraud or deception in the use of foods, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices.

• (5:20 p.m.)

The basic provision about foods is that no foods shall be sold if they have in or upon them a harmful or poisonous substance or if they are filthy, putrid, disgusting, rotten, adulterated, diseased or were manufactured or stored under unsanitary conditions. Another provision about foods relates to fraud or misrepresentation. This section provides that: "No person shall label, package, treat, process, sell or advertise any food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character, value, quantity, composition, merit or safety." This is a very wide and strong prohibition indeed. In the food section of the food and drug regulations considerable space is devoted to the control of the chemicals which may be added to foods and to the amounts of pesticide residues