

*Motor Vehicle Safety*

consumer should be made to know. But in the very technical area of the manufacture of motor vehicles it is incumbent on government and industry to produce the best and the safest motor vehicles possible in terms of safety and consumer protection, in view of the world-wide epidemic to which I have just referred.

Another footnote might be this, Mr. Speaker, that it is the only world-wide epidemic we know of today which is compounding at, say, a 5 per cent annual increase in many places, though not necessarily in Canada.

Before terminating my remarks I want to refer specifically to some of the aspects of this amending bill. I am very interested in safety features and the motor vehicles safety branch. The government has largely done a good job of making sure that safety features on motor vehicles are mandated, but I hope that in co-operation with the provinces and the government the motor vehicle industry will stop talking about safety features and start talking about performance standards, because what we are often doing is adding after the fact safety features to intrinsically unsafe motor vehicles.

While we are making progress with safety features, I repeat that we are adding these safety features in many instances to motor vehicles, be they trucks, cars or whatever, which already by design and by marketing and advertising concepts are unsafe. In future I hope we will talk about more than simply adding safety features to intrinsically unsafe motor vehicles. Rather, we should be talking about the government mandating, at the design stage, performance standards for our motor vehicles.

I want to add my full support to the concept of air bags. I regret to say that while I think many of the shoulder harnesses and restraints that we have already are very good, a great improvement over what we had ten years ago, they can be improved. For example, the moment the occupant of a vehicle locks the doors of the vehicle and secures his seat belt, in terms of percentages the risk of death on the highway is reduced by about 40 per cent. We know that 65 per cent of the deaths on highways are produced at collision speeds under 45 miles an hour, believe it or not, when an occupant is thrown out of a vehicle. Thus the restraint systems are very important.

● (1510)

I have heard the industry's rebuttal to the air bag system, that it is imperfect and at times it may function when you do not want it to function. There is also the problem, vis-à-vis the air bags, of damage being caused to the cars if it goes off when it should not. From the research I have made with my assistants, and those who have been so kind as to help me in those areas, no matter what is happening in the United States the minister should come forth and support air bags in motor vehicles. It is the most advantageous restraint system we know of at the present time. As I say, in the whole area of building safer cars, we should insist on performance standards as opposed to adding safety features to intrinsically unsafe motor vehicles.

[Mr. Graffey.]

There are specific amendments in the bill relating to the whole notion of recalls. We on this side are concerned about that, and the minister is as well. In the United States when any one of the automobile industries announces a recall, they make sure by surveying industry procedures that the recall is not only made but is effectively made in terms of the regulations which require the filing of registered letters at the central commission in Washington by industry and others. We are not quite up to that mark in Canada, but I would like the minister, when we go through the committee stage, to assure us that the recall amendments mean effective recall in terms of Canadian performance.

In conjunction with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Abbott) I should like to see, under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, a more regular public reporting system whereby there will be requirements under the regulations for the motor vehicle safety branch to make public its findings, even though they are not totally completed, at certain given intervals. Thus the public, the government, and industry in some instances, will know exactly where we are going in terms of safety features and standards in automobiles.

In our committee members on this side of the House have discussed this. I am not suggesting that part of one empire should go to another without great consideration, but because of the very specific work the motor vehicle safety branch is doing, I am wondering whether this specific branch and its group of dedicated and available people should not be under the aegis of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I know it is a transport matter, but as I see that section of the minister's department developing and doing its good work, it would be more effective if the motor vehicle safety branch reported directly, as things are now, to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I realize it was difficult to visualize that two or three years ago, but I feel it should be considered.

In terms of the world-wide epidemic of motor vehicle and highway deaths and injuries, everyone has a pet theory. We have heard them in conversations, but we really do not know. We have heard reference to drunken driving and this sort of thing. If we were to take an epidemiological approach, most accidents involve the road, the car, and the driver. Very often we do not know why people get into accidents, and once in an accident, what kills or injures them.

One of the basic things we need here in Ottawa, without building up a bureaucracy to touch upon the whole area of accident prevention, is a co-ordinated accident prevention research collecting bureau in order to get much more co-ordinated data before we move into the area of accident prevention. I am referring to data in terms of why people get into accidents and what are the causes of injuries and deaths once in them. We know today we are talking about standards and many features in automobiles which will help prevent people getting into motor vehicle accidents in the first place. It is all very well to say people were silly to get in them, but they do get in them. We should look into reducing the possibility of death, injury and/or serious injury. Perhaps the minister