

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

problems and criticisms that they had, they were going to vote for the bill and support the government. I think it is important that my Progressive Conservative colleagues set out their position on the various controversial elements of the bill. Have they abandoned the home owners who have this dreaded insulation problem? I would not want to suggest for a moment that they are hypocrites, although I know other people might use that term.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, it is a special privilege to speak to the House today on a subject which has some relevance to the profession in which I hold a degree both at the graduate level and at the post-graduate level. Very often in this House subjects that have medical relevance and are important to the welfare of the country as a whole are debated. There are five medical doctors in the House, three on the government side and two on the opposition side. Rather than call on these people who have the experience, training and background to give support and help to clarify issues, over and over again these subjects are left to Members of Parliament who have training in fields other than the medical field and who have without prejudice attempted to define the meaning of these medical problems. But they attempt to exaggerate at times the problems which are presented. They give remedies which are very frequently not at all appropriate to the conditions discussed.

Those of us with a medical background find it very difficult to sit and listen to that type of thing, which very frequently not only misleads the public but over and over again creates unnecessary anxiety and despair. I think it is incumbent on us, when there are critical questions concerning medical problems, that we make sure those who have the background at least be consulted, that the problem is discussed, and that they be given an opportunity to speak on the issue as I am being given that privilege today.

● (1530)

Long before I came into politics, Mr. Speaker, I realized that the politician has a knack of appearing to be knowledgeable and conversant on practically every subject that comes before him. As a surgical consultant in a cerebral palsy ward, I had an opportunity to talk with the Prime Minister of the day, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker. Certainly he was a man for whom I had great respect and I have fond memories of his day as Prime Minister. On this occasion I felt I had the opportunity to discuss with, and perhaps even educate, this distinguished parliamentarian on the subject of cerebral palsy. We saw a patient and I started my short harangue, but within about two or three minutes the Prime Minister took over. He told me his thoughts on cerebral palsy, how it should be prevented and treated, and what his experience had been on the subject.

It was then that I was introduced to the technique which is used so frequently in the political field. It is a situation frequently encountered that when subjects of medical interest are discussed, a particular politician will speak at great length and

give his version of what should be done. However, my experience has been that it is only when these particular problems relate to the politician himself that he will listen. So again I might say that I am particularly pleased to have this opportunity to talk on this problem.

The problem of urea formaldehyde foam insulation, Mr. Speaker, has had a very major impact on the emotional status, fears and worries of the public. I would like to quote a constituent of mine, a very level-headed, hardworking and dedicated mother in my riding. She says:

Do those who approved the program feel any remorse at all for what they have done? Do they suggest that we rent a hotel for seven people for six months so we can have our home entirely gutted and rebuilt because we felt that we could help ourselves and conserve at the same time? What is the future of our children and ourselves without the removal of urea formaldehyde foam? Where do we turn, to whom do we turn?

That is from a lady with a large family. Their home is paid for and at no time have they had any symptoms whatsoever. They are proud of the environment and setting in which they are able to raise their children. They have had this house for three years, they knew it was insulated with this foam, but at no time was there any suggestion of any ill effects from that particular type of insulation. Why should a lady of this mental capacity, whose husband is an executive at one of the local plants, suddenly have to be concerned about her residence because of this information which has so flagrantly been spread throughout my constituency and Canada?

Another constituent wrote me:

—merely because we are not suffering overt symptoms healthwise now, nobody knows what the long-term damage may be to one's health . . . cancer does not show up immediately.

Another constituent is worrying, not because there are any particular signs of illness but because of what they hear on the radio, see on television or read in newspapers.

What are the medical facts, Mr. Speaker? I do not intend to go into the administrative aspects of what the government intends to do, but I would like to acquaint you with the medical facts as those who are trained in medicine read, interpret and act on them. Most of us, if we have signs of ill health such as a rash, respiratory problems or gastrointestinal discomfort, will use our common sense and do what we feel is necessary. If that fails to give us the desired result, we go to our family doctor. For the most part, the doctor will either give you directions and support or he will say this is beyond his scope and refer you to an appropriate specialist.

In the Hamilton-Toronto area a colleague of mine, one Michael Newhouse, is a particularly skilful specialist in the fields of allergy and chest physiology. He is a professor of medicine at McMaster University and has written about 60 to 70 papers on the subject of environmental and occupational diseases referable to the respiratory system. I felt I should contact him and discuss his experience in this particular field. First and foremost he indicated that he had no cases referred to him from general practitioners in the Hamilton area with symptoms which could not be explained by causes other than urea formaldehyde foam insulation. He also indicated that there was no increase in cancer cases or any suggestion of