

Weights and Measures Act

those we have heard, not because the speakers did not display great ability and knowledge, but because fundamentally we are discussing things which have already been discussed, and nothing is decided, in short nothing is settled.

[*English*]

Mr. Barnett: Would the hon. member permit a question? If he considers this a frivolous debate, why is he taking part in it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I took care to mention that the members had made a useful contribution, but it is the situation itself which is unprofitable. What are we considering? A bill already introduced in this house in 1964 and in 1966. The hon. member has been harping on the same string for several years. The question has been referred to a committee which reached the conclusion that the bill, as worded, in spite of its very commendable intentions, did not cover the whole situation. As pointed out by a previous speaker, I believe, other jurisdictions, apart from the federal jurisdiction, could be affected and should help in achieving the aim sought by the sponsor.

Mr. Speaker, other acts, such as those governing imports and exports, should also be amended, if the purpose of the hon. member is to be fully achieved. He certainly knows it.

In spite of all this, the discussion goes on; a whole hour is lost really, simply in order to put this bill off indefinitely. I say that in all good faith, not in order to minimize the contribution of those who have spoken, but to show clearly and definitely that our parliamentary institutions are in need of reform, so that we may stop wasting needlessly the valuable time and energy we could use on other things.

Now, Mr. Speaker, since I must deal with the subject—otherwise you would call me to order—I must say that as a member of the committee known as the consumer credit and cost of living committee—Crédit à la consommation, I was in a position to consider the many problems faced by the consumers, for they are subject to all kinds of exploitation. They are likely to be dazzled by tinsel, by labels that do not clearly state the contents, by some wording that may lead the buyer to think that some benefit will accrue, in short by words such as “10 cents off”, “20 cents off”.

• (5:50 p.m.)

The committee discussed these matters; it heard several witnesses, including managers of large businesses, presidents of the largest chain stores in Canada.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, almost everybody agreed on the necessity of giving more information to the consumer, of warning him concerning the quality and the actual quantity of foodstuffs or goods which he buys.

One of the main recommendations of the committee suggested precisely the creation of a department of consumer affairs. As we know, this recommendation has been considered favourably. Today, the department is headed by a young, dynamic and brilliant minister, the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Turner), on whom we found such great hopes, and rightly so.

The hon. minister and his officials intend to set up throughout Canada organizations whose task will be to inform the public, to undertake an information campaign as extensive as possible, in order to give the consumers all the relevant data, all the necessary information so that they will not be taken in when buying goods.

In my opinion, that is one of the most efficacious measures and one of the most likely to meet the objectives set out by the mover of the bill now under consideration and to prevent the abuses we have deplored in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the Criminal Code provides that all false representation is an offence, but it has been discovered that it is very difficult to enforce those provisions.

Quite seldom have proceedings been lodged against large firms or chain stores on account of false representations, because basically, commercial advertising has developed so much, the strategy of publicity firms has improved so much that there would always be some means of finding devious methods to attract the consumer, without misleading him or being charged under the Criminal Code.

This is the reason why, without detracting from the merits of the sponsor of the bill or rejecting his commendable intention, we are entitled to express our reservations and say that the bill is not exhaustive and does not cover the necessary fields to give it the efficiency which we would like it to have. I believe it might be advisable, outside of a strictly administrative point of view, to consider measures likely to be more effective,