

*Hazardous Substances*

broader than the bill that was proposed last year. Instead of hazardous substances, the bill refers to the hazardous products, a broader category. In addition to chemicals, glues, household cleansers, bleaches and polishes, the bill will include articles like matches, flammable textiles, mechanical toys, electrical appliances and dangerous lawnmowers.

Under the original draft of the bill, the minister was empowered to act swiftly and decisively to ban hazardous substances directly they came on to the market and before damage was done. I agree with what my colleague said a little while ago that there is much more chance of the minister's powers being underused than overused. Although the minister and I may differ on a lot of things, I trust the Minister with powers to act quickly in putting substances that really are dangerous on the schedule and safely out of the reach of people, rather than making him come back to parliament every time he wishes to add a substance to the schedule. People are worried about parliament today because they feel parliament moves far too slowly to meet the needs of this day and age. If the minister has to come back to parliament to debate and pass a measure of this kind every time he wants to deal with a fresh hazardous product then, I think the consumers of Canada will have a perfectly legitimate grievance.

When the original bill was drafted, the Consumers Association of Canada wrote to members of parliament indicating that the bill was a good measure and they hoped it would be supported. As I say, the minister was empowered under the original bill to add any substance he thought hazardous to the schedule. I believe the minister is quite capable of using his discretion in this regard. There are many experts to assist him in his department. With all the red tape in government departments there is far more danger of the minister not using this power than overusing it.

A similar situation arose when the drug bill was in committee. Some members worried unduly about the need for the insertion of what were almost impossible safety standards. This was really an expression of lack of confidence in the food and drug directorate. I feel that until such time as the food and drug directorate errs sufficiently to lose our confidence, it merits trust. In the same way, I think that this minister and his department can be trusted sufficiently to test a substance to determine whether it is hazardous. If it is,

it can be placed on the schedule and removed from the reach of consumers before it can do any damage and before somebody gets killed.

I should just like to refer to the proceedings in the other place when this bill came up for debate. Dr. Crawford, the Deputy Minister of National Health and Welfare was quoted. He appeared in 1967 before the Senate committee on banking and commerce and was asked how his department had dealt with the emergencies that had resulted from the appearance on the market of necklaces made from the poisonous jequirity beans and the plastic ice balls from Hong Kong which contained contaminated water. In his reply to that question Dr. Crawford stated:

Well, we had to deal with the provincial departments on this. We telephoned and telegraphed and told them of the hazard which was in their shops and they dealt with it provincially. This is how we had to handle that situation. Of course it was a pretty time consuming process.

Of course it was. If the federal government is going to show leadership in the matter of one standard of safety for necessary products for Canadians from Victoria to St. John's, the department must have some jurisdiction for determining what are hazardous substances so that they may be put on the schedule to this bill.

According to the latest available statistics in regard to accidents in the home, in 1966, 275 deaths occurred from poisoning. I say that is 275 too many. I suggest that if parliament has to give approval every time a substance that is determined to be hazardous is put on the schedule of a bill, then while the bill is waiting to be dealt with along with all of the other bills before the house, accidents involving the use of this substance will occur and prove to be fatal.

I was appalled to learn that the banking and commerce committee of the other place that inserted what I consider to be a piece of dangerous red tape in the first draft of the bill did so by a vote of nine to three, thus taking from the minister the power to determine what are hazardous substances and to place them on the schedule. While there may be some amendments moved in regard to various safeguards, in regard to the appeals machinery and so on, I hope very much before the house is through with this measure the provision to which I refer will be eliminated in one way or another. This will restore to the minister the power he should have through this legislation to protect the consumers of this country against hazardous substances.