

Combines Investigation Act

coffee, or in respect of soap products such as New Fab, or Duz, or Tide, that makes them new. Is a bit of dye or colouring added to make the coffee browner? The consumer has the right to know these things.

Mr. Saltsman: The price is new.

Mr. Symes: As my colleague says, the price is new: that is about all. If we are serious about having tough consumer laws in respect of misleading advertising, it seems to me that we must adopt these amendments. Unless we do this, the kind of misleading advertising we have will continue, to the detriment of the consumers in this country.

We are also concerned about advertisements which use the word "improved". We notice claims to the effect that the product somehow is improved. Has there been an improvement in the box so that the product pours more easily? Does the soap pour more easily? Is that what "improved" means? Or does it wash clothes better? Let us have a definition of words such as "new" and "improved". These are important things. The advertising industry obviously believe they are effective, because they continue to use them in their advertising. We say they should justify that it is "new" or "improved".

We also wish to make illegal, references to a product which ignore fully undesirable side-effects which may result from the use of the product. Again there are many instances of this. There are instances in which products have been used which people have found to have very damaging side-effects. My colleague, the hon. member for Nickel Belt, referred to the lipstick industry, the cosmetics industry, and some creams which compounds the problem rather than solve it. We say if a product has a side-effect such as that in respect of Noxzema, where the product sometimes aggravates an acne condition, this should be made clear on the package. It must be shown that the product may have such a dangerous side-effect. Again, the consumer needs this kind of protection in society when the corporate giants are flooding the market with products of this kind.

In our amendment we also say that in all cases products must be sold on the basis of definable qualities and grades applicable to these products, so we would know what are the ingredients and would be in a position to compare, as purchasers, one product against another, not only in terms of what is being said in the advertisement but also in terms of what is placed on the store shelf.

● (1740)

I think these amendments are sensible and straightforward. The industry itself admits there is a problem. In its own publications, the industry recommends some of the very things that my colleague, the hon. member for Nickel Belt, has recommended in his amendment. The industry has recommended voluntary guidelines many of which are along the lines that my colleague has proposed. That is why I say it is important that the House adopt these measures.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Madam Speaker, in looking at the amendments placed before the House by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), I find it very difficult to understand why

there is so much opposition to accepting them and I am particularly appalled by the rather childish display of temper by the hon. member for Mississauga (Mr. Abbott). Because he could not come up with an adequate critique of the amendment before the House, he resorted to the worst of all possible approaches, that is, a personal attack which had no relevance to what is going on in this debate.

In a case before a court, whether a civil or a criminal case, these amendments would be considered to be the most mild criteria. Could anyone go into a court of law and make a case on behalf of something, using the arguments which advertisers use? If any one did so, he would be thrown out of court and told it was not evidence and surely no one would believe that. We insist that evidence presented in a court of law be hard evidence. Why should we insist less that it be hard evidence when we are talking to consumers?

Are consumers not entitled to some kind of protection? Do they not count? Are they simply to be patsies for the commercial interests of this country to use them as they see fit, as people were before we developed rules of evidence in courts of law? Before that time people could arbitrarily say, "That is what I say. Take it or leave it. I do not want to have to present evidence. I have the power and authority, and therefore that is my evidence". That is really what is going on in our society, with advertising today.

I want to make this point before I go on. Not all advertising is bad advertising; there is some advertising which is very useful to the consumer. Advertising that gives the consumer a chance to compare prices, a chance to compare values, or that provides him with useful information about a product, information which can be defined, is good advertising. If we are selling gasoline, advertising that talks about the actual quality of the gasoline is of some use, rather than advertising that tells the consumer that she has a tiger in her tank. That is the kind of thing we are talking about.

When you look at most of the advertising we have in our society, you find that it is not designed to enlighten the consumer; it is designed to confuse the consumer. Every trick in the advertising book is used to obscure what is really of value or to obscure the information which the consumer requires about the product he is being asked to buy. I can understand, perhaps not in logic, why a capitalist government committed to the principles of capitalism—the ideological hang-up—does not want to touch this kind of section because it cuts right at the heart of the system to which we are objecting, the kind of phoniness, the kind of commercialism that is foisted on society, a phoniness which depends on advertising not being touched, because the minute you start to say that advertisers have to tell the truth about products, the whole commercial practice starts to break down and people will be forced to bring products to the market that have real relevance to the lives of ordinary people.

Therefore, to touch advertising is to touch the system itself and what it operates on, which is strictly B.S. That is what the system operates on and that is why we cannot bring in any rules. If you can define things as complicated as the things we have in civil and criminal law, surely you can define things about commercial practice and behavi-