

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

• (12:10 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, since we are resuming consideration of the bill discussed yesterday and of my amendment, I think the minister could give an answer about that amendment especially requesting standards of protection for the consumers.

We have an international Bill of Rights as well as a Canadian Bill of Rights which has been in force for a few years now. It is therefore time, I think, to introduce in the house legislation providing for a charter regarding the protection of the consumers.

I have in hand briefs and reports already submitted to the consumer credit committee which contain sensible recommendations favouring consumers' rights.

Here, I wish to remind the minister of the main points which have already been made the subject of recommendations in committee and which, I believe, are still sound. However, the minister appeared to turn a deaf ear to them.

Since on page 3313 of the proceedings, mention is made of the consumer's rights, I thought I was justified in moving such an amendment to protect the consumers.

If some manufacturer failed to comply with the rules under the future Canadian consumer's bill of rights, his licence could be revoked at any time.

On page 3313 of the report appear the basic criteria that prompted the recommendations on the safety of drugs. There is also the suggestion that the consumer be informed on the quality of the various food products or drugs offered on the market.

Another need is supplying the consumer with the required information. The federal government has now in stock some valuable pamphlets unfortunately unavailable to the public. It should make use of that literature to inform the public on the food products and drugs now selling in this country.

Another recommendation was made in committee. It concerns the labelling of toxic substances, for the manufacturers can indicate the contents of some pharmaceutical or food products more or less clearly on the container.

It also appears necessary to define more clearly what quality means as applied to food or drugs. In addition, the source of such products should be identified.

Today, the source of various products on the market remains obscure and the Canadian consumer does not really know whether he is buying a Canadian or a foreign product.

On the other hand, some standards or regulations should be established to prevent the use of fractions of weights and measures.

Mr. Speaker, many other suggestions have already been made to the consumer credit committee, in respect of relevant subjects which are not dealt with in the bill. It would be interesting for the consumers to benefit from a bill of rights, to ensure them more protection.

On page 3310 of the same report, another suggestion is made concerning the protection of the consumers' rights. It is a more simple designation of various qualities of food products. Another recommendation is to the effect that labels should be printed with warnings about the handling and use of dangerous substances.

Another recommendation tends to forbid the inscription on the labels of fractions of ounces. I made the same recommendation a few minutes ago.

A standardization of net weights, over four ounces, should be established.

In my opinion, all these recommendations are logical, intelligent and plausible. On the other hand, I do not mean to say that all recommendations contained in the briefs should be accepted today or tomorrow by the minister in order to protect the consumer. There are, however, some essential recommendations that should immediately be considered. For instance, the public is taken in by false advertising. As a matter of fact, the public is led to believe that it will save money if it uses certain packages, when that is false. The public should be informed on the choice of simple or sophisticated packaging and on the quality of products. We should identify the source of all products made in Canada.

A little further, the same report recommends a better dissemination of information to the consumer, so that he will be better informed on the quality of the various products that are available on the market.

There are three government publications dealing with the quality of drugs. They deal with inscriptions on labels and with drugs that should be found in every home. Perhaps the committee could recommend general distribution of government publications, instead of waiting for people to request them. Are not consumers getting a great many publications