

Before this legislation goes through, I would like to see him convince himself that unit pricing is needed by consumers in this country to help them get the best value for their consumer dollar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. It is my duty at this time to remind hon. members that if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Basford: I have just had a most engaging invitation from the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) to go tiptoeing through the supermarkets with her. I am not sure, with women's liberation, and one thing and another, who would supply the money, or whether it would be proper for me to supply the money.

Mrs. MacInnis: It would be fifty-fifty; dutch treat.

Mr. Basford: I am not sure what my wife would think of it all. It is not every day that I get invited for a date with such an attractive member as is the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

I will touch very briefly on a number of points that were made, first, by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Howe). I appreciate what he had to say about hazardous products and their labelling and packaging. I know the hon. member has taken a great interest in the safe packaging of hazardous products, and I appreciated the comments he has made in the House over the years on this subject and the communications he has had with me. I think we have seen, in the last little while and we will see in the future, vast improvements in the area because we now have the Hazardous Products Act which deals with the sale, importation, packaging and advertising of products which are deemed hazardous or likely to be hazardous to the public. We are now taking steps by way of regulations and we will, as new designs and safer packages are developed, be able to regulate to ensure that products which are hazardous but still necessary are safely packaged so that the children of Canada are protected from them.

For example, just the other day we promulgated some regulations making it an offence to distribute a certain kind of very caustic cleanser from door to door by way of samples, because a particular firm distributing these samples had them slipped through the mail slot in the doors and children on the other side could pick them up and get seriously injured. We have now been able to pass regulations making that an offence. We have said that if people want to distribute this kind of product door to door they have to deliver the samples directly into the hands of the responsible householder. I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo on this subject, and I can assure him we are anxious to take whatever action is appropriate under the Hazardous Products Act to deal with the subject.

He also spoke about consultation. I should like to assure him that both I and my officials throughout the

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course of the preparation of this bill have consulted with various groups, the ones he mentioned as well as consumer groups and organizations such as the Grocery Products Manufacturers Association. Let me say that these consultations are not for the purpose of getting their agreement to the legislation but rather so that I, and officials of the department as well as people in the business, may have an understanding of each others position and attempt to write reasonable legislation which deals effectively with the problems. There has been such consultation in the past, and I am sure it will continue in the future. They of course are free to appear before the committee, and I know they will, to make whatever points they wish. To the extent that they can convince me and members of the committee that changes should be made, of course, the legislation will be improved.

I want to say one thing about people appearing before the committee. Of course it is a little presumptuous of me to say that because it is up to the committee to decide whether or not it wishes to hear people. However, I would urge the committee to do so because I know that there are people, other than government witnesses, who want to be heard. I know that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway, who will be a member of the committee, will urge that, and I hope the committee will decide to hear witnesses so that all points of view on this important piece of consumer protection legislation can be brought to the fore in the hearings of that committee.

May I say to the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway that I appreciate her complimentary remarks about the legislation, that it was dealing with a great many problems about which consumers have been complaining. I do not want at this point to get into an exhaustive discussion of the whole question of unit pricing, but let me say two things: from our point of view and the point of view of this legislation, there is a good deal more wrong with the U.S. truth-in-packaging legislation than simply the fact that it has left out unit pricing. The whole question of the proliferation, which is dealt with in Bill C-180, is far more effectively dealt with in Bill C-180 than it is in the U.S. bill. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I should not be commenting on the legislation of another country. But may I say, with respect to the hon. member, that it is an over simplification to suggest that all that is wrong with the United States legislation is that there is nothing in it with respect to unit pricing, and to suggest we have just copied the United States so our legislation has a big hole in it. The question is more complicated than that.

● (5:40 p.m.)

May I also say that we are not ignorant of this whole question of unit pricing. We have been following discussions on it extremely carefully. Officials of the department have gone to the city of New York, and I have visited with the Consumers Department in New York which is pioneering regulations in unit pricing. Officials of my office have made purchases in stores in Washington, D.C. which were being used experimentally to see how unit pricing worked. We have not written this into