

Weights and Measures Act

packaging and it is very difficult to exercise judgment about weights, measures and that sort of thing. The bill highlights the problems which we face and I hope that the government will take heart and try to improve matters, even if that improvement is marginal only.

Mr. Jack Roxburgh (Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words about the over-all principle of the bill. Certainly the objectives of Bill C-23 are good, but they do not go far enough. The explanatory note says:

The purpose of the bill is to ensure that a retail purchaser of goods, packaged in a wrapper or container, be fairly informed of the weight or measure of the contents; and to control competitive trade practices—

It is possible that the government presently has a general power under the Weights and Measures Act, section 35(1), to remedy the grievance mentioned. That section, in part, provides:

And so on.

I doubt, if the legislation is examined carefully, whether the government has the power necessary to meet the present day advanced techniques of manufacturing and selling. Nevertheless I am heartily behind the idea of this bill.

• (5:40 p.m.)

Whether we like it or not, these days us men seem to be pulled into the business of shopping; and more than anything I do not like shopping. All the same, going shopping with our wives may do us good because we can become educated to know just what they go through when they try to choose among products which are being sold in many of our chain stores. The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) spoke well on this subject.

One piece of merchandise always gets my dander up, and that is a package of bacon. The packaging may have improved, but it has not improved much. Hon. members may remember those nice packages of bacon with a nice lean strip right along the top. At one time you only saw the lean strip but now you might just see a little fat. Once, when shopping with Mrs. Roxburgh, I debated with her which package of bacon we should buy. I said we should buy this package and she said we should buy that. We had an argument about which was the leaner package. In the end we bought both packages and we both got caught, because the bacon in neither package was lean. The hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) gave us a few similar examples some minutes ago.

[Mr. Reid.]

I happen to be in the fruit business and I want to speak of a practice that has been diminishing gradually, that of putting coloured coverings over packages. In my district we had a great old peach grower; in fact, he was the leading peach grower in Canada, with something like 600 acres of peaches. This man put on quite a campaign against coloured covering, calling it a veil of sin. I can only say that we have many veils of sin in our chain stores. They may not sin so much with coloured packages, but as has been demonstrated, they do sin with their packaging.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we cannot protect the consumer against herself—and women are the hardest of any people I know to protect. Our housewives talk about the high prices of goods, and about the money they spend to fill the larder for the coming week. I have followed Mrs. Roxburgh in some chain stores and watched her pick up a package of this and a package of that, only to realize afterwards that had she looked a little, had she shopped around a little, she could have got a similar product at a much lower price. Everybody wants everything done up in a nice little package. Our women want to reach for this and to reach for that, and to serve pop when he comes home from work with the least possible work. That is all very nice, but that sort of thing costs money.

I think that the over-all idea behind the bill is excellent, and I feel that the government should take another look at this matter of weights and measures and see if something cannot be done to make the task of the housewife easier, as she goes into the store to buy. At least she should know what she is buying.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Auguste Choquette (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to say that I endorse what the Minister of Justice (Mr. Trudeau) said this morning when he announced officially that he would be a candidate for the leadership of the Liberal party. He said then that, should he get the position he was seeking, he was determined to proceed with parliamentary reform.

Through the presence of our colleagues here and in view of the futility of the debate which has been going on, I notice that it is more and more imperative to reform the institution that is parliament and to put an end to the frivolousness of debates such as