

Food and Drugs Act

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, the Member for Nickel Belt asked about the penalty clauses. The penalty clauses are incorporated in the Food and Drugs Act. These are amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and do not change the scope or extent of the penalties presently in the Food and Drugs Act.

Mr. Rodriguez: Madam Chairman, is there a process for appeals?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, the answer to that question is similar to the answer to the first. There is an appeal procedure under the Food and Drug Act. However, quite frankly, in terms of the seizing of products and the appeal process, it is not an appeal process similar to that which we are used to in a judicial sense because of the type of product that would be seized and the shelf life of products. Therefore there is a sensitivity there.

However, we have found, through working with our inspectors, the consumers groups, and the retailers and wholesalers, that there is a reasonable balance in the approach and the sensitivity of inspectors. However, I cannot put forward an appeal process outside of the Food and Drugs Act presently constituted. It is not similar to that with which we are familiar in a judicial system.

Ms. Copps: Madam Chairman, I realize that it characterizes the NDP to run off at the mouth. I was sitting outside and could not believe my ears. I know that the former Liberal Government was responsible for many evils—

Mr. Murphy: Agreed.

Ms. Copps: My back was burning—

Mr. Murphy: I rise on a point of order, Madam Chairman. If the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain—or Hamilton East—would like to move a motion to that effect, I am sure she could get unanimous consent for it.

Ms. Copps: Madam Chairman, I understand the Freudian slip of the tongue about the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain because when September comes the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain will be sitting on this side of the House among the Liberals.

However, I will be brief because we have all agreed that this is a measure which should be passed and will be passed. Why are they wasting our time coming up with spurious arguments, complaining about a decision of the Supreme Court?

• (1950)

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, the Hon. Member is right in the sense that the Cabinet of the former

Government had instructed the drafting of this legislation back in 1983. It died on the Order Paper.

My concern is not with the past. My concern as Minister of National Health and Welfare is that we have the ability to enforce that which Canadians are now following voluntarily in terms of the Food and Drug Act. Others who might be importing goods are not necessarily bound by that morally or legally. That is my concern.

Mr. Kindy: Madam Chairman, how does the Minister intend to enforce the transport of food between provinces? Will inspectors be at the border? What will happen if there is free trade with the United States? Will there still be no free trade between provinces?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, we have food inspectors now. I do not have the exact number, but there are approximately 550 to 570 across Canada. We do this inspection now.

This amendment allows us to do it legally, which we have been doing otherwise, and were doing prior to the Supreme Court decision. That remains in place.

In fact, we are finding that the industry is very much interested that inspectors have this power legally in order that the industry is also protected from practices being used without the power of law which we had earlier.

In terms of free trade, I believe that if there is a trade agreement, obviously conditions under the Food and Drugs Act and other import Acts relating to health and safety of Canadians would be in place.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported.

Mr. Epp (Provencher) moved that the Bill be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): When shall the Bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Epp (Provencher) moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.