

[English]

First, there is the extension of the scope of the Act to cover all electro-magnetic and acoustic frequencies. This, for example, would permit the establishment of a standard for radio frequency heaters. Many of these devices have been found to emit radiation at levels well in excess of currently accepted international standards. Extending the scope of the Act to include all acoustic frequencies would permit an assessment of the health effects of high levels of infrasound which come from air conditioning, heating and ventilating systems, compressors and large diesel engines. The biological effects which have been attributed to infrasound include hearing loss, involuntary eye movements, nausea, slowed reactions and fatigue.

Second, there is the extension of control of devices for which standards have not been prescribed and which are defective or create a risk of injury to the health of the user. Under the present Act, new types of radiation-emitting devices for which standards have not been prescribed can be sold even though these devices may be hazardous or ineffective. For example, new applications for the use of lasers are being discovered. However, in view of advancing technology in this area, the establishment of adequate safeguards in the form of standards would require an appreciable period of time.

● (1530)

The third point is the extension of the control of devices for which standards are applicable at the time of sale, importation or lease. Under the existing Act, radiation emitting devices manufactured outside of Canada, prior to the establishment of prescribed standards, can continue to be imported and sold indefinitely, even though these devices are potentially hazardous to Canadian users. For example, the dental X-ray equipment, which was manufactured more than ten years ago and considered to be substandard, may continue to be sold or leased under the present Act unless it is amended.

The fourth point is the prohibition of false or misleading representations with respect to the design, construction, performance and safety of radiation emitting devices. The present Act contains no restrictions on false or misleading claims made by manufacturers or distributors.

Finally, there would be a provision for notification of devices which create a risk of injury to health, or do not meet the prescribed requirements. This provision will require a manufacturer or importer to notify the Minister of any device which, after sale or lease, the manufacturer or importer finds to be injurious to health, or fails to perform according to the indicated performance characteristics.

My dear colleagues can readily see that these amendments to the Radiation Emitting Devices Act are essential for the regulatory control of radiation emitting devices that are potentially hazardous to the Canadian user and are not now subject to the provisions of the present legislation. Parliament passed a Bill early in the 1970s to control radiation, but after 12 years of experience we have discovered that there are circumstances which that law does not cover and which should be under legislation. Therefore, this Bill is to ask for the support of the

Radiation Emitting Devices Act

House to cover those other matters in order that the Department of National Health and Welfare will be able to protect the health of the Canadian people. In view of that, I would invite my colleagues to give speedy passage to this Bill.

Mr. Scott Fennell (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, the first place we should start on radiation emitting devices is right here in this House. I have never been in any one room where so many people are forced to wear glasses. I am sure it is indirectly having a negative effect on our health, and that it is caused by electronic products.

I am concerned with the broadness of this Bill. As the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) is aware, the Bill was originally drafted on September 12, 1979, by a Conservative Minister. It is a little bit shocking that the Government has taken so long to upgrade this Bill, because each day there are new devices being developed and there are new problems resulting from the new devices. I agree that the Bill requires speedy passage. But there are problems and weaknesses in the Bill which were not in the original amendment submitted by the Conservative Minister in 1979.

First, the Bill should be restricted to radiation emitting devices. It should not, through the back door, be covering other noise levels, which are provincial territory. I am worried that the Bill will include such things as chain-saws. If a chain-saw is muffled to too great an extent, it does not have the same effect. That problem can be solved by wearing ear muffs. I hope that the Minister is not intending to include such things as chain-saws, jackhammers, diesel engines and scrapers. That is not the intent of the Bill.

Originally, the Act was passed principally to cover X-ray equipment. It has now gone beyond that. As the Minister mentioned, it now includes lasers and video screens. There is a lot of doubt and a lot of misunderstanding concerning video screens. There are so many new technological changes in the workplace resulting from electronic devices that I agree the Bill must be broad enough to protect people from the hazards of the new devices of which we are not aware. However, I would be very annoyed if the Bill were designed in such a way as to protect, through the back door, against certain industrial noises which come under provincial jurisdiction.

I think the Bill will be given speedy reading, but it is our request that it be sent to committee and that it be examined carefully, clause by clause. It is a very serious Bill and it is particularly serious in this age of new technology. I would suggest that the Bill should only apply to new devices which are developed in the future arising out of new technology. It should not apply to the basic tools of construction and of other industries as that could have a negative effect on those industries at a time when we cannot afford to stop people from working.

Hopefully, with time things will improve. As the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. De Bané) pointed out, if the Bill is passed, it could have an effect on air conditioning and heating. I would like to point out to the Minister that perhaps we should deal, under this Bill, with some of the window air