

Honourable senators, that is why at the present moment we are not ready, with the scientific information we have at hand, to refer this problem to a committee, which would result in considerable expense to the taxpayer. Look at what was in the *Globe and Mail* this morning.

There is at present no direct evidence that saccharin causes cancer in humans. A former federal drug administrator, Commissioner Alexander M. Schmidt, recently stated:

Our scientific capacities to detect chemical residues have in many cases outstripped our scientific ability to interpret their meaning.

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Similarly, there are questions about the interpretation of the Canadian data and their applicability to man.

The Office of Technology Assessment in the United States has stated:

We badly need the kind of careful, objective and balanced assessment which this body has agreed to undertake.

Specifically, they have been asked to:

1. Determine the validity of applying data from animal experiments to human beings.
2. Evaluate and quantify, if possible, the potential risk that saccharin poses to human beings.
3. Assess the potential benefits of saccharin, especially to diabetics, persons with heart disease, obesity, or other medical problems.
4. Report on the potential availability of alternative artificial sweeteners.

Some of these findings can be predicted. On the first point it will be said that we cannot be certain that something that causes tumours in rats will cause tumours in man, but that it is reasonable to make the extrapolation. Assuming the rat data do apply to people, the opinion of statisticians will be that while the risk cannot be quantified it can be said to be small but real.

What reviews have been made of the matter suggest that while it is not necessary for the care of patients with diabetes or other disorders, saccharin or some form of artificial sweetener certainly has some value in making life more tolerable from a dietary point of view. I do not mean that after two drinks of Scotch you should have dinner and put saccharin in your coffee. In addition, saccharin is used as an additive in many prescription drugs which, pharmacologists say, would have to be "reconstituted" were the sweetener to be prohibited. This is most important.

As to the alternatives to saccharin, it is safe to say that none is available right now. The Department of National Health and Welfare in Canada, and the FDA in the United States, must review the information they have received, and only after that can they force saccharin products off the shelves. As one scientific writer has stated, "Both these departments have opened a Pandora's box and fallen into a fine kettle of fish." But not by accident.

There are several aspects of this governmental banning of saccharin that are disturbing. In particular, the way that the government has managed this matter leaves much to be desired. Either the Canadian government has realized a major scientific discovery, or it is going to be the laughingstock of the scientific world. There is very real reason to believe that the latter may prove to be the case.

I wonder why the Government of Canada has not followed the normal practice on such scientific matters by having the results of its research published in a scientific publication, thereby subjecting it to scientific review, analysis and criticism before taking such definitive and severe action?

I wonder why the Minister of National Health and Welfare in his press release indicated that he had consulted the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Diabetic Association and other professional and scientific groups, only to have the statement repudiated by the Canadian Dental Association. Indeed, we have learned through questioning by the opposition in the other place that there was no consultation in the true sense of the word, but that these groups were simply called in a few days before the government's announcement and briefed on findings and intended governmental action.

I am informed that the President of the Canadian Medical Association has been asked to seek expert consultation to review the scientific evidence for the banning of saccharin so that he may report appropriately to the near future annual meeting of the CMA on this matter. Think of that.

I wonder why the assistant deputy minister who heads the Health Protection Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare appears to have been appointed as an official spokesman for government policy on this matter. I note that he appeared on the CBC television program *Front Page Challenge* to defend the government's action, which, at least, has major political overtones to it.

Honourable senators, there is very little in the way of scientific, documented literature available on the subject. I believe that the government research officers should have published the results of their research and had it subjected to scientific review prior to such severe action being taken. It is impossible for us to discuss such a highly technical subject in any meaningful manner until such time as the experiments and the data have been subjected to scientific review. I suggest that in the interim the status of Canada's scientific community is in serious jeopardy. In these circumstances, I cannot help but suggest that the action taken by the government has been premature and precipitate, and is an over-reaction based on unsubstantiated and inadequate scientific review.

I wish to conclude with the opinions of two of the outstanding scientists in the world. They happen to be Canadians. First, Dr. Kenneth Fergusson, former director of the Connaught Laboratories, when the Connaught Laboratories were the Connaught Laboratories, states: