

one would be glad to have a great deal of publicity given to public health. I should be glad to have the public educated along these lines. But if the department itself is not living up to its own standards, as it seems to me was admitted to-day, and if under pressure from the milling interests it permits practices which are not sound or about which there is divided medical opinion, there is not much use in passing an item of this kind.

I believe the minister could give us a little more assurance than he has done that there will be a thorough investigation of this matter. Surely the medical people ought to be able to say very definitely—and ought to be unanimous on the point—as to whether or not potassium bromate is injurious to the health of people who eat bread made from this flour. Further than that, I suggest the minister ought to be able to tell us whether or not reports are correct that this substance produces a diseased condition on the part of people who handle it. These are questions which can be definitely determined, and until such determination takes place I think we ought to retain the old sections. As the minister is aware, I am not an expert in these matters; I can take merely what has been stated. Certainly nothing the minister has said has cleared up the charge. Until that is done we might as well give up public health education. We lead the public to a point where they are educated to eat pure food, and then they are told that under pressure from the millers safeguarding clauses are deleted.

Mr. POWER: I cannot but admire the ingenuity with which the hon. member brings us back to an item which was passed in his absence.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I admit that, but I related the subject to the item under discussion.

Mr. POWER: I shall not take advantage of the fact that the other item passed; I am not in the habit of doing that. The point is that under regulations made under authority of the minister, as conferred upon me by the Food and Drugs Act, there were certain regulations giving a description of flour. Flour was described as has been stated by the hon. member.

For many years a number of improvers, including potassium bromate, have been tolerated. Some one in the department issued instructions to some of the flour millers to the effect that potassium bromate would no longer be tolerated. One flour miller who apparently had not been in touch with the department wrote to me to find

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

out the state of the case. I had an inquiry made, as I have a right to do under the authority conferred upon me as a minister. As a result of the inquiry and of investigations by the Department of Trade and Commerce, investigations by the Department of Agriculture and the opinion I was able to get from medical men, I came to the conclusion that the small quantity of potassium bromate which would be mixed in the flour in process of milling was not deleterious to humans. In order to get even the ordinary dose of potassium bromate which is usual in sickness, a man would have to eat a hundred loaves of bread.

Mr. BENNETT: In how long?

Mr. POWER: My right hon. friend raises the point as to whether or not this is what I might call a continuous process of poisoning; that may not be the technical term.

Mr. McCANN: Cumulative.

Mr. POWER: I have left my papers upstairs, but I believe I can state the situation in non-technical terms. According to the opinion of Mr. Aitken of the grain board there is no such cumulative effect. I have that opinion in writing. After lengthy inquiry the British government came to the conclusion there were no deleterious effects; but, as I said this afternoon, the French government held a contrary view. The United States millers use potassium bromate, and they are in competition with us at every quarter of the globe. In certain sections of the world, and, I am told, particularly in hot climates, this substance has a beneficial effect upon the bread. What the process is, I am unable to say.

Moreover, so far as I am aware, there is nothing in any regulations which prevents a baker from using this substance indiscriminately, except that the bread may be seized when it is adulterated, or made dangerous for human consumption. So that it appeared to me, after listening to the representations made and from all the information I could get, that there was no reason why this should not be permitted. In consequence of that, the regulations which strictly defined what should be flour have been deleted. But that does not lessen in any way the protection given to the public under the Food and Drugs Act. Prosecutions may be instituted just as before if there is any adulterant used in the flour. In so far as the public are concerned, they have just as much protection as they had before. In regard to the technical question as to whether or not potassium bromate is deleterious, in the exercise of the authority conferred upon me