

Artificial Food Additives

Mr. MacGuigan: This study will address itself to some of the concerns associated with the validity of the results of former studies.

The Health Protection Branch is collaborating in this study by determining whether or not the children involved in the study are allergic to various food additives. It is hoped that this will permit an assessment of a possible association between allergies due to specific food allergens and hyperactivity in children.

It is the aim of all the studies described to determine the principal causes of hyperkinesis with a view to reducing the incidence of this disease. Obviously:

... the syndrome of the hyperactive child, regardless of its cause, is a real and trying condition for all who are associated with its victim. Cures cannot be found until the causes are understood.

I think this indicates that the government is very concerned about the subject, is pursuing research in the matter, and therefore the independent action called for by the hon. member for Athabasca is not needed.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech on this motion, which I will read for the benefit of those hon. members who have not read it. It reads as follows, and it is in the name of the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk), seconded by the hon. member for Hastings (Mr. Ellis):

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take independent action to examine the relationship between artificial food additives and hyperactivity in children as well as between additives and behavioural changes in adults.

I found it interesting that just a few moments ago the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) indicated that certain studies were going on in a Canadian hospital. When the hon. member for Athabasca asked him in a very clear voice to identify the hospital, the hon. member could not do so. I am not suggesting that the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville would intentionally mislead the House, but it would be interesting for us in the House and for the people of Canada to know the extent of the studies and the places where they are being carried out.

There are a couple of reasons why I have involved myself in this debate. And following a former dean of law at a Canadian university—not a medical doctor, but a dean of law—who has involved himself in a matter which is medical, as a lawyer I feel comfortable in this debate.

● (1610)

I am concerned about this problem. This possible relationship has been brought to my attention by teachers, people involved in the administration of education, and educators generally in the area which I represent. They share the concern I feel. I hope government members do not talk this motion out, and the reason for that is that this motion has been moved by a medical doctor who has practised family medicine in a small town in Alberta, Lac la Biche. He has been engaged in the practice of family medicine, and that has brought him into contact, in this context, with the problems which must accompany the life and the professional work of a

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

small town medical doctor in a way which is perhaps different from the experience of those who have had the advantage of practising in metropolitan areas.

It is a great tribute to the medical profession that the hon. member for Athabasca and other medical people are members of this House. When a medical man brings to the attention of this House something which is of concern to him, this House ought to listen. If there is nothing unreasonable in the proposal, the House ought to adopt the view that the motion should be accepted.

I am proud to be associated with the hon. member for Athabasca. He has been the critic of the Department of National Health and Welfare for the official opposition for some period of time, and he has immersed himself in the health problems of Canada. Aside from being qualified professionally to speak on this subject, he is also the father of six children. This motion has been advanced with some concern and some understanding, and I hope that it will be greeted as such and that we will not utilize all our time speaking on it. I hope the House will follow my suggestion and allow the matter to come to a vote. I myself do not intend to speak very long.

This matter has engaged not just the attention of the medical profession; it has gone far beyond that. I mentioned the educators and parents who have expressed concern since this information was released. I think I am being charitable when I say that we have had some difficulty convincing the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) that artificial food colouring poses a serious health threat to Canadians. Canadian standards are certainly not as stringent as those in the United States, and our fears were not at all allayed when in September, 1976, the Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare failed to follow the lead of the U.S. food and drug administration in banning red dye No. 2, red dye No. 4, and carbon black. At that time we discussed the matter with some seriousness, and it was of considerable concern.

This matter is so important that it has engaged the attention of the Canadian School Trustees Association, which has been in constant communication with the hon. member for Athabasca. In fact at the beginning of this month they reported on a meeting of its executive to my colleague. That meeting occurred in mid-January in Toronto, at which time concern was expressed about the whole question of food additives. That meeting also dealt in particular with motion No. 6, which is the subject matter of the debate today. The report of the president of the Canadian School Trustees Association is that after a lengthy, exhaustive, and thorough discussion of the problem the executive approved support for the effort of the hon. member for Athabasca to have the matter taken more seriously than it has been to date.

This is the kind of private members' motion to which we should give credence. If there are tests being conducted in other jurisdictions, the government can certainly have the benefit of the results of those tests. However, this House ought not to say, by its vote or by talking this motion out, to the Canadian people that it is not concerned. I want my colleagues