

please move and to effect the kind of change which will protect our citizens.

● (1750)

I was interested in my colleague's approach when he talked about the fact that young teenagers who are just starting to be independent cannot be monitored. They are having fun, and although they are aware of the potential danger they might not ask the question. He said that if there is an uninformed person giving that information, then how can they protect themselves? It is important to provide accurate information so that allergies to mushrooms, seafood, peanuts, soy oil, and all these various things is prevented in the best way possible.

It is important to make the Department of Health proactive. It is important that Canada Health and Welfare hear the voices of the Members of the House of Commons and is sensitized to the reality of our seriousness in this particular action. It is not just a ploy. All Members of the House regardless of political affiliation or Party are bringing this concern to the population.

I strongly recommend that while we may have some problems around this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, you and I know that where there is a will there is a way. We can look at this problem from the point of view of finding creative solutions which I am sure will be forthcoming both from the industry and from the population at large.

I strongly urge all Members of the House to pursue all positions and all possible suggestions in support of this legislation, and to take it seriously. I hope that this Bill will proceed to second reading and be referred to a legislative committee as soon as possible.

**Mr. Bob Hicks (Scarborough East):** Mr. Speaker, the issue of food adverse reactions and the labelling of restaurant foods is indeed a very complex matter. It cannot be resolved through a simple solution such as enacting regulations that would require ingredient labelling on all restaurant foods. That is not to say that this situation does not require action to provide some additional measure of protection to the sensitive consumer. However, before instituting a unilateral solution, we should consider fully all possible courses of action.

In this regard the Health Protection Branch of Health and Welfare Canada has dealt in the past with specific problems of adverse reactions to certain food additives and is presently investigating the entire area of concern on a much broader front. The following comments will outline briefly how the Health Protection Branch has addressed this issue in the past, and the various approaches that are presently being investigated.

Many years ago, monosodium glutamate, MSG, a common ingredient used as a flavour enhancer in many foods, was found to cause untoward reactions in a small portion of the population. MSG was already required, under the Canadian food and drug regulations, to be declared on the labels of

prepackaged foods, so foods eaten in restaurants were the major focus in this situation.

The Health Protection Branch consulted with representatives of the food processing industry to determine the extent of the use of MSG. It also consulted medical and toxicological experts to determine the severity of these adverse reactions. Based on the information obtained from these consultations, it was concluded that MSG did not pose a life-threatening situation, and that a program of education for both consumer and food service personnel would offer the best means of reducing the potential for such reactions to occur. To this end the Health Protection Branch produced a fact sheet on MSG for distribution to the public. This program appears to have worked very well to make the public more aware of this particular problem.

In the early 1980s another issue in the food allergy and adverse reaction area presented itself. This time it was sulphites, a group of substances that had been widely used for years as preservatives. The adverse reactions suffered by some consumers to these substances were severe enough to require medical attention and even hospitalization.

The Health Protection Branch once again sought input from several expert sources on this issue. From the many meetings and consultations with groups such as the Allergy Information Association, the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, the medical community, regulatory agencies from other countries, and the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, there emerged a clearer picture of the problem.

It was learned that the use of sulphites on fresh fruits and vegetables, such as in salad bars, was the most common source of problems. In further meetings with the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association this organization voluntarily moved to discourage the use of sulphites among its members. In addition, the Health Protection Branch felt it prudent to enact appropriate regulations prohibiting this use of sulphites. As well, it continued its program of consumer education through the preparation and dissemination of a fact sheet on sulphites. Based on the available information it would appear that these actions have been effective.

Today, we are faced with a situation in which the labelling of food ingredients in all restaurant foods and food allergies have been brought to the attention of the entire nation by the deaths of young Canadians. There is certainly unanimous agreement among the Members of the House that the deaths of these young people are tragic and that something should be done to prevent, to the extent possible, any further incidents. However, this action should be based on a sound, rational approach to the problem. This is the type of action that is expected to be forthcoming from the Health Protection Branch.

Representatives of the Health Protection Branch have already entered into a round of consultations with the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association and the Allergy