

Food and Drugs Act

been used in the preparation of food, and that so far as possible all foods should eventually carry a list of ingredients. Discussions have been held with government departments and groups interested in food labelling. A tentative agreement was reached whereby it will be the long term objective of all departments involved to require, so far as possible, a listing of ingredients on all foods.

At the present time the Food and Drug Directorate is examining the 14 groups of unstandardized foods which are not at present required to carry a list of ingredients, with a view to removing them from this exemption. Plans are under way to hold meetings with the processors of these foods to discuss the implementation of this proposal. Approximately 50 per cent of bakery products now carry a list of ingredients. These changes have been brought about on a voluntary basis by the industry with some stimulation from the Food and Drug Directorate. Already a trade information letter to all food manufacturers has been prepared requesting that the industry develop labels for soups which will carry a complete list of ingredients, and it is hoped that the standardized foods will be considered as soon as possible so far as this policy of labelling or listing of ingredients on labels on food products is concerned.

The Consumer's Association of Canada has made representations to the Food and Drug Directorate for a revision of the food and drug regulations to require that a list of ingredients be printed on the containers of all packaged food products. A special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on consumer credit stated in its interim report with regard to the listing of ingredients that, where applicable, ingredients should be revealed both by name and percentage of composition. Since its inception, a group of Canadians who formed an association called Allergy Information has been pressing for a listing of ingredients on all foods. The members of this association being allergic to one or more food constituents, have more than a passing interest in a knowledge of the ingredients of a food. To them, a lack of knowledge of the ingredients of a food may be a very serious health hazard when that food is consumed, and I as a physician understand that well. The lack of knowledge of the ingredients of a food may cause a serious allergic reaction, and perhaps even an anaphylactic reaction.

[Mr. Haidasz.]

Members of the medical profession have also made representations to the Food and Drug Directorate. These doctors, especially allergists, have given examples of cases of tragedies that have occurred when a food was consumed which contained an allergen. I believe that all of these representations are important, and I am assured that the Food and Drug Directorate and the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs are giving this matter their serious attention.

I have mentioned the trade letter that has gone out to the manufacturers of soups. Hon. members have probably also read in the press during the summer about the announcement of the Food and Drug Directorate concerning drugs. It issued special regulations for the listing of information on labels. I am sure that the public, and physicians in particular, have benefited from the regulations that are being introduced by the Food and Drug Directorate in the Department of National Health and Welfare.

The problem of labelling is a very complicated one, as mentioned by one or two previous speakers. Many problems arise in the listing of foods. At the present time it is estimated that approximately 200,000 labels will have to be examined. This, therefore, will be a long term project. However, the officers of the Food and Drug Directorate are working closely with officials of other government departments, especially the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs which has a direct interest in food labelling. They are exploring the best means of achieving this objective.

Some hon. members have also stated that they have allergies and know from first hand experience how important it is for the consumer to know what is in a particular food. They have appealed for a complete listing of all ingredients on labels on all foods.

I support all the arguments that were brought forth this afternoon and I would like to assure all hon. members that I will bring them to the attention of the Food and Drug Directorate as well as to my minister, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, in the hope that further action will be taken to protect the Canadian public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour appointed for the consideration of private members business has expired. I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At six o'clock the house took recess.