

asked by Senator Buckwold on June 16, 1981, concerning the ban on the use of saccharin as an additive in food.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): I hope there was no urgency.

Senator Frith: The decision to ban the use of saccharin in foods, including beverages, was based on the fact that it causes cancer in animals. Since the decision to remove saccharin from foodstuffs was taken in March 1977, further information has become available, some of which indicates that consumption of saccharin may be associated with the development of bladder tumors in humans as well as in animals. This has further supported the view of scientists in the Health Protection Branch that saccharin use must be restricted. The Department of National Health and Welfare, as a regulatory agency concerned with health, could not abrogate its responsibilities and continue to permit the use of saccharin as a food additive on the available information on its safety.

It was recognized at the time of the ban that regulatory actions of this type would cause a degree of hardship to certain individuals. Thus, prior consultation was made with medical experts and representatives of the food industry. As a result, saccharin is available in pharmacies for use in the home by diabetics and others who for personal reasons may wish to use this table-top sweetener.

It may be noted that restrictive actions on saccharin have also been proposed elsewhere. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), has made such proposals. However, proceedings unique to that country's legal system have resulted in a moratorium on the FDA's proposal. In addition, Sweden has banned the use of saccharin in some foods, including beverages, and placed restrictive limitations on others.

Honourable senators will no doubt be interested in knowing that the Department of National Health and Welfare has recently approved the use of a new, low-calorie sweetener called aspartame. This action will expand the range of products available to those who have to restrict their sugar intake.

EFFECTIVENESS AND QUALITY OF FOOD INSPECTION SYSTEM

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have an answer to a question asked by Senator Bosa on December 9, 1981, concerning the effectiveness and quality of the food inspection system.

We are indeed aware of the delisting of the Canada Packers plant in Toronto for export to U.S.A. which took place on December 1, 1981. Officials in the meat hygiene division indicate that the plant was delisted because of construction and maintenance problems which were subsequently corrected. It has to be pointed out that the quality and wholesomeness of the finished product has never been jeopardized. Very strong controls were implemented and rooms which were not in compliance were temporarily taken out of production. The plant was relisted on January 7, 1982.

The Ministry of Agriculture provided inspection in 519 registered meat slaughter and processing plants in 1981. Each

[Senator Frith.]

of these plants was reviewed monthly by regional veterinary supervisors. In the same period USDA veterinarians conducted 525 plant reviews. In addition, the headquarters audit section, responsible for the verification of application of national standards in the department, conducted 951 inspections.

The effectiveness and quality of inspections was, therefore, very closely monitored. New programs and procedures such as AQL, Acceptable Quality Level, and TQC, Total Quality Control, are continually being developed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of inspection.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE—OBSERVER STATUS FOR SENATORS

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Marshall. I notice that he is not in the chamber this evening, and I hope that his colleagues will draw his attention to this delayed answer since I know this matter is of great concern to him. The answer relates to a question asked by Senator Marshall on February 23, 1982, concerning Senate representatives at the Law of the Sea Conference.

Honourable senators, Senator Perrault has been in touch with the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and we are arranging to send two senators to the Law of the Sea Conference as observers. We are presently working out the details.

POLAND AND U.S.S.R.—SANCTIONS

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Haidasz on February 23, 1982, concerning the processing of applications of self-exiles in Vienna.

Honourable senators, Canada will be taking a total of 6,000 self-exiles from around the world this year. Most of these people will come from Europe, but not all. I am informed that the number to be accepted from Vienna—and this is out of the total of 6,000—will be 3,500 people.

We have recently augmented our staff in Vienna to be certain that we have enough personnel to process the targeted quota for that city.

BANKS

PROFITS AND OPERATIONS—PROPOSED COMMITTEE STUDY

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked by Senator Phillips on February 23, 1982, concerning the government's announcement of a committee study of bank profits and bank operations.

Honourable senators, I have made inquiries and I am informed that this study is to be carried out by a committee of the other place, namely, the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.