

Food and Drugs Act

The intent of the Bill is good. The goals and objectives are real. They are the kinds of things we like to see. We feel that the Bill is very inadequate when we cannot make the financial institutions accountable to the Government of Canada. We know that nothing different will happen. We know that the banks will still be the source through which people can launder money and remain attractive to criminals. I take exception to the Minister's comments that this is the Canadian way. The Canadian way is much more accountable and not becoming the protectors of people who want to launder money.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): It being five o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS—BILLS

[*Translation*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Thursday, June 9, consideration of the motion of the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) that Bill C-289, an Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (list of ingredients), be read a second time and referred to a legislative committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): When the House last considered Bill C-289, the Hon. Member for Scarborough East (Mr. Stackhouse) had the floor. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Kent (Mr. Hardey).

[*English*]

Mr. Elliott Hardey (Kent): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on this Private Member's Bill, Bill C-289, which is intended to amend the Food and Drugs Act regarding the listing of ingredients. The most important aspect of Private Members' Business, of course, is the opportunity for Members of Parliament from all Parties to develop and promote new laws and ideas together or, if some choose, to speak and vote against them and to do so as individual Members regardless of what side of the House they sit on. It is certainly a refreshing exercise and one that we all look forward to participating in.

I want to compliment the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) for bringing forward this issue. It is a matter that I support. It is an issue of sensitivity which is receiving increased attention by health professionals and food regulators

due to concerns raised by the public at large as well as the print and visual media.

I have noticed that previous speakers have referred to tragedies resulting from food sensitivity reactions in their ridings or in ridings nearby. I too witnessed the grief of a family who lost their nine-year-old daughter last October. Kelly Chinnick was allergic to nuts and she was unaware that peanut butter was in the icing of a cake she tasted at a Thanksgiving celebration at her school. The reaction was fast and no one could help her. I know first hand that this type of grief never really subsides. As a caring society, we must do everything we can to help the Chinnicks and other families who find themselves in such distress.

In order to be of assistance, at first it seemed that I simply had to research and assess this problem in a practical way and surely some answers would surface. As I began that research, I found that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) was not only aware of the increased prevalence of food allergy reactions but was also very concerned. He had already issued instructions to his Department to determine how much real increase in food-sensitivity reactions there had been, how much was perceived due to the availability of better instrumentation and diagnoses and how much was due to the population as a whole becoming more sensitive for one reason or another.

I found as well that the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare was already conducting a study on the feasibility of mandatory labelling of food products sold in restaurants and fast-food outlets. Non-medical components used as fill found in prescription drugs, both brand name and generic, were also under study, and representatives from the Canadian Restaurant Association and the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association as well as the Minister of National Health and Welfare were called as witnesses.

I also found that difficulties in assessing the problem also included documenting the specific incidents, determining if the adverse response was related to the consumption of foods in the first instance, and if so, to which food component. Health professionals have to play a detective game, the complexity of which would put any amateur sleuth to shame. They have to consider such things as age, sex, geographic location, racial origin, income levels, lifestyle, diseased state and much more to even properly assess the question. Of course, the question is, what is the rationale for labelling and what needs to be labelled.

The Government is seriously trying to wrestle with these problems in the face of pressure from individuals or groups proposing any number of quick solutions. The Government does not want to end up with an arbitrary system of disclosure that is patently and scientifically unsound. It is likely that a large proportion of food-sensitivity reactions are due to relatively few foods or food components. On the other hand, this is offset by the potential of almost any food to elicit a food-sensitivity response in an occasional individual.