

Adjournment Debate

know that has happened because of this department's gross errors on cyclamates and why I feel that senior public servants must now be held responsible before the law for damages when they act irresponsibly.

I will list some of the companies affected: Berryland Canning Company, Maple Ridge, B.C., lost \$60,000. These are private companies. Canadian Cannery lost \$1 million; E.D. Smith lost \$400,000; Tom Steeves, Anassis Island, B.C., lost \$200,000. This was a small firm and it almost caused its bankruptcy. At least 12 small independent businesses were in financial difficulty as a result of the cyclamate ban.

No one can count the number of diabetics, obese, or hypoglycemia victims who were seriously injured or who died as a result of this deprivation of sugar substitutes. I doubt whether this official will investigate that. This official sneered at me when I suggested in a private meeting that if he is concerned with cancer harming people then he should remove cigarettes from the stands. I might add as well that he might take carrots off the shelves which contain carototoxin, a nerve poison, and an hallucinogen called myristicin.

● (2207)

Shrimp should be taken off the stands since it has 40 to 170 or more parts per million of arsenic, as well as olives and vegetable oil found in salad dressing which contain the carcinogenic substance benzo(a)-prene; and so should even apples, which contain phlorizin, which interferes with the enzyme system of the cells.

It is interesting that these same people who have banned saccharin are pushing to free marijuana when the experiments so far on humans show that it has carcinogenic qualities and cause other ailments. The minister and her predecessor in this portfolio echoed the laugh of this official when several members asked why they did not ban the known carcinogenic cigarettes. They said it was too much of a habit in society, yet here they are pushing for a drug not yet known to be safe and suspected to be carcinogenic with other dangerous components.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please, I regret to interrupt the hon. member but her time has expired.

Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I wish to congratulate the hon. member for her perseverance with regard to this whole subject matter. I know her avowed concern is sincere. I would like the hon. member to appreciate, however, that the state of knowledge in that area is constantly being perfected. As a government, we must act on what we know and everyone will agree that we must take a calculated risk in order to protect the health of Canadians.

I would like to correct several statements made in the House earlier by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) on the subject of cyclamates. Cyclamates were never totally banned; they were restricted to use in tabletop sweeteners in 1969, not 1970. The action was not arbitrary but was based on careful consideration of the scientific data then

[Mrs. Holt.]

available. Many countries, including much of Europe, took the same action as Canada. Other countries, including the United States, Japan, England, Sweden and Finland, have banned cyclamate totally. The recommendation to restrict cyclamates was made to the former minister of national health and welfare (Miss Bégoin) by officials of the Food and Drug Directorate. The Health Protection Branch did not exist at that time.

The then Director General of the Food and Drug Directorate has since retired. I understand he was considered highly qualified and is still in great demand as an international expert. The hon. member may be interested to know that in a 1974 decision on a court case in which a company using cyclamates brought legal action against the government for restricting the use of cyclamates, the judges ruled in favour of the government. He stated that, in his opinion, the officials of the Food and Drug Directorate, in recommending that cyclamate be restricted, "acted prudently, expeditiously, and reasonably in the public interest. To have acted otherwise... might well have exposed them to a charge of negligence or a breach of duty".

It is my understanding that, contrary to the hon. member's insinuation, the current head of the Health Protection Branch is considered highly competent both by his peers in government and by the scientific community in general. It is unfortunate that the protection of this House is used to attack the reputation of an official of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

With regard to the 1969 cyclamate decision, I would like to emphasize the statements made earlier. Toxicology is a relatively young science, and new and more sophisticated testing procedures are constantly being developed. It is logical that, as we learn more about any given substance, decisions which were made on the basis of less information may, on hindsight, appear questionable. I am satisfied that we do the best we can with the data available.

SUPPLY AND SERVICES—CRITERIA USED IN CALLING FOR TENDERS

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I posed a question to the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer). It concerned the questionable tendering practices of this government. The Canadian Association of Data Processing Service Organizations has charged that more than \$2 million in government contracts were awarded to a Quebec based computer firm, not because it submitted the lowest bid, but rather, in the words of the Minister of Supply and Services, because of "socio-economic considerations". Part of the minister's reply to me was: "One must recall that in 1977-78, 78 per cent of the electronic data processing contracts were awarded to Ontario companies". He went on to say: "I think it is fair and just that we should try to give other companies a reasonable share of the market when they are qualified, and that is what happened."