

Adjournment Debate

reduce it 2 or 3 per cent over all you are going to balkanize the country."

That is just as intelligent as telling us now that Quebec is not to be allowed to make selective cuts, that it is going to balkanize the country. They have the balkans on their mind over there. They are going to balkanize the electorate of this country. They have already done that.

We have come now to a position where everyone in Canada who takes any interest in these matters can see how real an attitude this government takes toward national unity. When it has an opportunity to do something constructive in a national unity sense with the province of Quebec, it tries to act like a Russian emperor and crush any opposition in that province. Then, when every other party in the province backs the Parti Québécois government, the Prime Minister gets more rigid than ever, more inflexible than ever. Rigor mortis has set in. He is determined that he is not going to budge.

Mr. Speaker, I have given my advice to the Minister of Finance. I repeat it in ending my remarks—admitting error clears the score and proves you wiser than before. If it helps, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that I have been wrong at times, too.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

HEALTH AND WELFARE—MINISTER URGED TO RECONSIDER BAN ON SACCHARIN

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly asked questions in this House on the saccharin ban and received what were patently self-serving answers from the officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare, using an excellent member of parliament—a minister who must rely on them—as their voice in parliament.

On Tuesday, May 16, I again asked the question. Now my question was based on a new revelation, one that could have been expected in this area of power brokerage in the back rooms of the department. Eight years ago the same vocal official, literally proselytizing his anti-cyclamate campaign, used the same scare tactics, based on the same type of so-called excessive research—rather comical research if it had not had such bad effects.

Without warning, without debate in parliament, without even consultation with the representatives of the people in parliament, a ban was imposed on the use of cyclamates, an artificial sweetener that had been on the market for 24 years.

It was done then as was the saccharin ban: as though the people of Canada were irrelevant.

The question now is more serious than cyclamates or saccharin. It is—who runs Canada? Are the officials of the department or the elected representatives in charge? I have evidence of the contempt of a few officials for the members of parliament, not only in the Department of National Health and Welfare but in the shoe quota board of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Department of National Revenue, the CBC and CRTC; and other members of this House can give testimony and names to this experience that I have had in this one area and in the several other departments.

On October 21, 1969, the officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare imposed their decision on parliament. It was carried into the House by a minister who then—as now—had to depend on these people. No warning, no right of the representatives of the people to comment or to argue against the ban. It is most telling, Mr. Speaker, to note the words on August 1, 1970, of this one official. Just a month before all cyclamates came off the stands, he said:

● (2202)

Cyclamates are a dead issue as far as food manufacturers are concerned. I have the feeling that if we were able to lift the ban on the sweetener tomorrow we would not touch it with a ten-foot pole.

This same man who has pushed his words through this House and who will no doubt do it again tonight said eight years after the ban, just eight days ago, on May 10, 1978: "In our view the great preponderance of world evidence indicates that cyclamates do not produce cancer". Then he went on to discuss the Abbott Laboratories production of an all-cyclamate table top sweetener again, and he arrogantly said: "It is not an earth-shaking product". And not only this, Mr. Speaker, he is further quoted as saying: "We think Abbott Laboratories may be using it as a foot in the door. But in our opinion the door is still closed; we won't consider opening it a crack until we get all the information and we have time to review it."

I ask these questions, Mr. Speaker: Who does this man think he is? Who vested him with such power? Why is parliament allowing him to continue using this power? How is it that he has had the second chance to decide that Canada's diabetics, 400,000 of them, and the 13 million overweight people cannot have their sweets? Why is he still in this job? To whom does this person owe his loyalty? To the people of Canada, or some special interest group who may want to remove the competition? I also ask why does this man not order the same kind of experiments using sugar, which is believed to be dangerous and to have carcinogenic properties? If an equivalent amount of sugar was used in these experiments on rats it would amount to 40,000 teaspoons a day. I am sure the rats would strangle on it.

There is no doubt in my mind that the answer this person will give to members in this House to cover his own error will be that saccharin was in the cyclamates. It was an impurity that caused it. I want to put on record tonight the damage I