

Adjournment Debate

of the most important topics I have ever dealt with. I hope and pray that we are successful in our recommendations and that a proper piece of legislation will be forthcoming from the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Bernard Valcourt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the Hon. Member's concerns regarding obscene material entering Canada which depicts women and children in a sexual context and the proposed reduction of person years within the Department of National Revenue, Customs and Excise, as some people link both issues. I can advise Hon. Members of the House that the Department of National Revenue shares their concern with regard to the importance of prohibiting child pornography and material which appear to degrade and dehumanize women.

The Department of National Revenue is responsible for administering tariff Item 99201-1 of Schedule C to the Customs Tariff which prohibits the importation into Canada of certain materials. Materials suspected of being treasonable, seditious, obscene or hate propaganda is inspected thoroughly by customs officers, and if it is judged to come within the terms of tariff Item 99201-1, it is prohibited from entering Canada.

Regarding the matter of cut-backs within the Department and the control of pornography, I can assure Hon. Members that measures have been selected to allow the Department to streamline its operations, improve productivity and, at the same time, maintain its level of service to the public. None of the reductions will affect the Department's capability to carry out its mandate, including the interception of pornography.

One of the measures is the centralization of the examination of international mail in order to improve service to the public while substantially reducing costs. Customs' ability to screen the mail entering Canada will not be affected by this centralization. Customs inspectors will be concentrated in 12 screening centres. Their functions will not change. Customs inspectors will continue to examine the mail, assess duty and taxes owing, and prohibit the entry of such goods as drugs, pornography, and firearms.

● (1810)

The prevention of such contraband will be aided by the use of X-ray systems in the primary screening centres. Furthermore, sophisticated detection equipment now being developed by the Department will be utilized to screen incoming international mail for drugs. Customs' efforts to intercept pornography, both through the mail and at border crossings, will not be diminished by the person-year reduction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the general question of control of such materials, Hon. Members will be interested to learn that department officials have been meeting ever more frequently with the various groups that have expressed great concern about this matter. As a result of those meetings, we

are now considering a number of procedures designed to tighten up control of this kind of imports.

In addition, the Government's legislative response to the Fraser/Badgley reports will give customs officials more power to control pornography.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I might emphasize that the department will maintain its essential role in preventing imports of child pornography and materials which degrade and dehumanize women, materials which are unacceptable in Canadian society.

[*English*]

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS—REQUEST THAT WARNING LABEL BE PLACED ON DRUG ASA

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, at the end of February or the beginning of March of this year, a 15-year old girl became ill with what her mother thought was either a cold or the flu. She was treated with a drug such as Aspirin or Anacin which contained acetylsalicylic acid. It has been a long time since I have had classes in chemistry, Mr. Speaker, but we know that drug as ASA. About 10 days after the girl took this type of medication, she died. The cause of death was identified as Reyes syndrome.

That girl was the daughter of a well-known citizenship court judge. That highlighted the problem and put the spotlight on a concern which people around the world have been aware of for the past three years, that is the concern about the possible link between ASA and Reyes syndrome. In spite of the fact that that concern has been known for the past three years, the manufacturers of drugs containing ASA have not put a warning label on their products. They have not indicated on their labels that there is a potential problem connecting ASA with Reyes syndrome.

I understand that the Department of National Health and Welfare has been carrying on discussions with the pharmaceutical manufacturers for the past several years about this problem. The industry has now voluntarily agreed to place a warning label on their products. I have a letter from one of the well-known drug companies in the country dated May 30, 1985, indicating that it is going to put a warning on its labels in the following terms: "Consult a physician before giving this medicine to children or teenagers with chicken pox or influenza". They indicate as well in this letter that they will have these labels in place by the fall of 1985.

That did not happen, as you know, Mr. Speaker. The labels were not in place by the fall of 1985. There is nothing in the letter referring to the potential problem with Reyes syndrome. In spite of the fact that the industry indicated it was going to do this last fall, in spite of the fact the industry indicated it had nothing to do with Reye's syndrome, the Department of National Health and Welfare has not moved in any way to make this sort of warning compulsory and the fact that it refer to Reye's syndrome. The U.S. has made it compulsory to have such a warning on the labels in this situation and it has made it compulsory to refer to Reye's syndrome and that problem.