

Pesticides

"B.C. is to await federal word on chemicals". From Regina, "Pesticides in groundwater". From Vancouver, "Lawyer wants 2,4-D spraying voices heard". Again from Montreal, "There has to be a better way of keeping pests down". From Toronto, "Study launched into effects of herbicides on New Brunswick workers". Again from Montreal, "Popular weed-killers days may be numbered". From Washington, "Emergency order bans much-used pesticide". Again from Toronto, "Insecticide cited as health danger should be banned, officials say". That referred to Temik. Again referring to Temik, "Study cites insecticide detected in P.E.I. wells". From Ottawa, "Pesticide polluting Ontario waters, govt. report says". Again, "Ontario corn-belt rivers have pesticide, report says". Another more recent headline reads, "Poisoned well was a nightmare, farm woman tells Lasso inquiry". Again, "Pesticides may boost illness." Another one reads, "Neighbourhoods alarmed by poison sprays used in lawn care". Another one reads, "Minto stops using 2,4-D on properties". "Ministry spraying cited in three planters' ailments". "Conservation council concerned over chemical usage". "Chemical disposal rapped in Alberta". "Chemical warfare: bugs, weeds are winning it". "Farmers trying in vain to curb hoppers".

If time permitted, I could go on to give you a full run-down as to how frequently the media are reporting on the question of pesticides and how they are seen to endanger human health. Therefore, the question is: Are we not ready, as I submit we are, to investigate this matter fully on a national basis in order to hear the views of those who are using the chemicals, those who are concerned about them, and the public in general?

As we all know, pesticides are biologically active substances. They pose a potential risk to human beings. We know that the effects of chronic exposure to certain types of pesticides can lead to some forms of cancer or tumours, reproductive disorders, birth defects and other long-term illnesses. Numerous areas of Canada have had groundwater contaminated, as has been frequently reported, by chemical pesticides. These substances are now believed to pose a substantial threat to human health. You will also recall the effect on nature as described some years ago by Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring*. That book has become part of what has become almost a collection of memorabilia on this subject.

We are now in a new phase where the media are reporting to us incidents which confirm the preoccupation of the 1960s. This motion proposes the launching of an independent task force which would cross this nation to investigate this matter. It could be tailored along the lines of the Pearse water investigation which took place in 1985 and would attempt to achieve the following. First, it would establish the need to collect information on the existence and use of herbicides and pesticides and pass it on to the public. Second, it would endeavour to hear from concerned citizens, non-Government organizations, municipal, provincial and federal officials, labour and industry their views on the use of pesticides and alternatives. Third, it would search for new directions for research and development and alternative methods.

• (1710)

A very important role for this task force would be to search for alternative products and practices in agriculture and forestry. The task force would provide a forum for a good discussion of the fact that we will have to share the world with a few pests in the decades ahead, particularly with regard to lawns, highway green areas and parks. We have become almost obsessive about weeds. The use of certain herbicides, particularly 2,4-D are unacceptable to human health, both to those who have to utilize it and, in the long term, to the public which comes in contact with the substances in areas which have been sprayed.

Those are the five or six major points which this national task force would endeavour to identify. I emphasize in particular the part of the investigation which would deal with alternatives. There is great potential to finding better answers through biological controls such as a product called Bt. There are also answers through manual methods such as the clearing of forests and through a better understanding of the role of predators in nature.

Time does not permit me to elaborate further on this matter. I thank you for this opportunity to put this proposal to Members of the House. I look forward to the comments of Members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Marin (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, last October 9 the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) suggested that the Government should consider establishing a task force to examine, on a national basis and with full public participation, the extent to which the use of chemical pesticides over forest, agricultural and other lands threatens human health and destroys the environment. He also said that the task force might recommend alternative methods or practices of pest control.

The Minister of National and Welfare (Mr. Epp) shares the concerns expressed by the Hon. Member and did seriously consider the most appropriate solutions, in co-operation with his colleagues who are responsible for pest product control regulations. In this case, Mr. Speaker we must bear in mind a number of major factors. Indeed, I would suggest that responsibility for protecting the environment and health of Canadians against any possible negative impact of pesticides belongs to both federal and provincial administrations.

In addition we must remember that at each level of Government this task might fall within the jurisdiction of several departments, so much so that a change such as proposed by the Hon. Member, no matter how innovative it might be, could only come after consulting the various Government agencies involved.

Furthermore, while many traditional scientific and technological methods to ensure the safety of pesticides both prior and subsequent to the authorization of their use in Canada have been introduced or reviewed since the last time several