

November 26 concerning the export of some tonnes of a chemical called vitavax to Nepal, a shipment that occurred earlier this year through CIDA.

● (2220)

I was concerned when I raised the matter in the House, considering that a product with a similar name, vitavax, was under investigation in Manitoba because of the death of a Manitoba farmer. While the question was addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) or his parliamentary secretary, the answer I received was given by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), and I was somewhat surprised that the Minister of National Health and Welfare answered that question. The minister misinterpreted my remarks, and I never did receive an adequate answer to the questions I posed. The minister assumed that the death of the Manitoba farmer was related to the product which was being shipped to Nepal which she assumed contained lindane. Lindane is a chemical which is at present under review in the United States. This review was recommended by the scientific panel of the American Environmental Protection Agency which has advised severely restricting use of that chemical. I understand that the chemical which was shipped to Nepal did not contain lindane. However, it did contain two other chemicals about which very little is known. Spokespersons from the company itself, Uniroyal, have indicated that very little is known. The two active ingredients of vitavax 200, the product which was shipped to Nepal, contains thiram and carbothiin. Very little is known about either of those two active ingredients.

My concern essentially is that we are shipping from western developed countries to underdeveloped countries technology which has not been adequately tested here. Perhaps we are using underdeveloped countries almost as a testing field.

I understand that this product vitavax 200 is not registered either in Canada or in the United States. When we telephoned CIDA to request further information, CIDA suggested to us over the telephone that vitavax 200 was approved by the American Environmental Protection Agency. A telephone call to that agency confirmed that vitavax 200 is not registered in the United States, and that the agency is not aware of it. vitavax is on the Canadian list of chemicals which were tested by International Biotest Laboratories. There exists no conclusive proof that this product is safe for extended human use. It has been on the IBT list, and the government has not indicated as yet that it has reviewed the available data about that chemical. There is nothing which indicates that this chemical is not harmful to the user and to the consumer.

An American toxicologist was brought here by the company, Uniroyal, to testify in the inquest which continues in Manitoba. This toxicologist suggested that the man did not die from lindane poisoning. In fact, he might not have died from lindane poisoning. He might have died as a result of poisoning by other ingredients in the product called vitavax RS flowable. I understand that Uniroyal has not made available to the inquest the exact chemical composition of that product. The company has

### *Adjournment Debate*

been hiding behind the notion that it is a trade secret, and I find this somewhat objectionable. I was really concerned that the minister should jump so quickly to a conclusion with respect to the testimony of this one toxicologist as opposed to the testimony of the attending physician, and the coroner in Manitoba reached other conclusions.

I was particularly surprised and appalled at the minister's attempt to answer my second question. There have been some problems with respect to the product vitavax in the west. There are repeated cases in which the germination of seeds treated by vitavax is very low.

● (2225)

In fact, I pointed out in my question that the Saskatchewan wheat board has over 500,000 pounds of rapeseed, treated with a product called vitavax, that has a germination rate of only 10 per cent. In other words, of all the seeds that are planted, only 10 per cent sprout. This is a very serious problem, and there are, I understand some court cases in Saskatchewan where farmers are suing the company Uniroyal for passing on to them seeds which germinate only up to 10 per cent. If this is also a problem with the product we are shipping to Nepal, I think it is very serious for a country like Nepal. If only 10 per cent of the seeds they plant will come up, in a country that is so low in food and so desperately needs food as does Nepal, this could be indeed a very serious matter. I received no answer whatsoever to the concern I expressed about the germination rate of the product which we have sent to Nepal. It is as though the minister had totally ignored my question and went on rambling—and I emphasize the word rambling—about her opinions of what is happening in the inquest following the farmer's death in Manitoba.

I am amazed at the reaction of the government. I was asking for some honest technical answers. I think these are legitimate concerns. For the government to suggest that I am needlessly frightening people, that I am being paternalistic to the people of Nepal, are red herrings. The government should take a good, hard look to see what it is doing, particularly when it exports technology from this country which has not been satisfactorily tested and ships it to underdeveloped countries—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

**Mr. Doug Frith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I will try to deal as best I can with the question the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) has raised, to which the Department of External Affairs feels it can reply, and then, if I have time in the three minutes allowed me, I should like to address some of the other points he has raised with respect to the health question of vitavax 200.

Vitavax 200 is one of 20 different formulations of the chemical and does not contain the ingredient lindane around which the inquest into the death of the Manitoba farmer has centred. However, that is not to say that vitavax 200 is not a chemical which should be handled properly with the necessary