

But we must also bear in mind that thalidomide is still a good drug. It was its side effects, as later evidence indicated, that can be harmful. It induced sleep quickly and without ill effect, but we have learned that it should never be taken during pregnancy.

I am not standing in defence of thalidomide, but it must be pointed out that even the common headache remedy can be dangerous, and cause death, if misused.

There is no such thing as a completely safe drug. The safety factor must be weighed against the value of the drug in relation to its own known dangers.

Penicillin is an example. It has saved millions of lives. But some people, sensitive to it, have died. Should we prevent the sale in Canada of penicillin?

Canadians must be allowed to enjoy all the benefits of scientific discovery—and there have been many in recent years—but they must also be protected.

When the risks cannot be avoided, they must be reduced as much as possible to the point where the balance will be on the side of promoting health and not compounding suffering.

This committee was set up by the government with a twofold terms of reference. It is being asked to consider and report upon:

- (a) The law and practices relating to the control of the introduction, marketing and use of drugs;
- (b) The dangers arising from the contamination of food by the use of chemicals to kill weeds, insects and other pests.

I understand from the chairman that the committee will attempt to concentrate first on the drug question and I, too, will do so today.

I will, of course, follow proceedings with intense interest. I would be pleased to return at a later date to explain fully the department's role in the protection of Canadians from chemical contamination.

Both questions deserve undivided attention and I commend the committee for separating one from the other as much as possible.

The responsibility that every Canadian receive the utmost protection in the use of drugs is one that cannot be discharged by any one division of government. The burden must be shared by manufacturers of drugs, the medical profession, pharmacists and even individual Canadians.

The role of the government is not to delay or deny the benefits of science to Canadians, but to ensure that drugs reach the market only after all reasonable precautions have been taken to inform the medical profession of any risks and of any undesirable side effects.

Increased drug safety is a goal we are always striving for.

Our objective was increased safety for the public when we introduced in Parliament last October legislation reinforcing aspects of our drug control provisions.

The changes in our Food and Drugs Act provided authority to impose additional controls on the distribution of drug samples; authorized the prohibition of the sale of a drug, and emphasized that new drugs require special consideration.

Our aim is also safety when we require that a manufacturer take every precaution possible in introducing a new drug.

There must be quality control, exhaustive animal and clinical testing and the provision of detailed information to the medical profession.

It is also the responsibility of government to maintain a staff competent to administer the food and drug legislation.

The job of this staff is to provide adequate technical advice, conduct analyses and tests of drugs, do research and carry out field inspections.