

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) regarding pesticide pollutants. With your permission, I wish at this time to elaborate slightly on this question. During the past few months there has been considerable scientific data and information published on the harmful effects of certain pesticides for the purpose of alerting the public to just how toxic some pesticides are and how carelessly they have been used. Notwithstanding this, the pesticide market continues to boom.

For 25 years man has been concocting extravagant assortments of synthetic chemical poisons and distributing them all over the planet. We continue the wide use of pesticides to wage war on endless varieties of bacteria, insects and rodents which continue to plague us. There are certain tangible benefits which can be credited to pesticides, such as the control of malaria, typhus, cholera and other diseases, and there is no doubt that they have contributed to making life more comfortable and nuisance-free. But as the price of this we have been taking unto ourselves some not very calculated risks. It is now well known from evidence adduced that the use of some pesticides such as heptachlor, Aldrin, Toxaphene, DDT and many others has often produced unintended side effects on fish, wildlife and human health.

● (10:20 p.m.)

I refer to a brief submitted by Pollution Probe, an organization formed at the University of Toronto by students, staff and conservationists and presented to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson). It refers mainly to the dangerous effects of DDT on wildlife and human life. The four major points from the brief would appear to confirm their opinion. These are the following: First, DDT upsets the organisms in the human ecosystem and threatens the survival of a vast number of species of wildlife. Second, DDT has been

linked to behavioural disturbances and inhibitions of learning in humans and animals. Third, DDT has been positively correlated to the incidence of cancer, cirrhosis of the liver and hypertension in humans. Fourth, there are, I am advised, other acceptable alternative pesticides which are now available.

I therefore submit this is a most serious issue today. The public is concerned, I am concerned and the government should be concerned. I should like to know what steps the Department of National Health and Welfare will take to curtail or stringently regulate the sale and use of these harmful pesticides and thereby protect the health of the people of this country.

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member for High Park (Mr. Deakon) I should like to say that the federal government is definitely concerned about the health and quality of life in our country and indeed in man's total environment. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) has taken, and continues to take, an active interest in the problem of pesticides referred to by the hon. member. In particular, the Department of National Health and Welfare has participated in a review of the pesticide problem undertaken by the Federal Interdepartmental Committee on Pesticides. Furthermore, the pesticide section of the Food and Drug Directorate has reviewed, and is reviewing on a continuing basis, the tolerance levels of pesticide residue in food.

May I assure the hon. member, by referring him to the recent statement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, that a government statement on pesticides will be made next week.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.