

### Supply

with respect to the question of the PCB spill. The problems which can be created in those incidents bring forward all of the important issues, transportation and the historical aspects. Just about every part of a hazardous product which one could think about or discuss is identified in this single focus.

I believe the first thing we have to do is to look at the relevance of the issue. As compared to gasoline, how dangerous are PCBs? From the notes which I have to make sure I do not make any errors I see one of the things which struck me in trying to find out just how dangerous PCBs are. What has happened historically with this substance? There have been several spills we can go back to to try to get an accurate idea of what the relative level of danger is. In 1968, hundreds of Japanese who consumed PCB-contaminated rice developed acne-like skin lesions, discolouration of toe nails, fingernails and gums. They showed a thickening of skin, especially in the region of the eyelid. In 1979, a similar outbreak involving some 1800 Taiwanese occurred. I would note, Mr. Speaker, the fact that these events were not the result of a one-day acute exposure but rather the result of very long and high level of sustained exposure. The skin diseases developed slowly and lasted in some cases for years. The onset of the skin signs occurred three or four months after the start of exposure and only after individuals had ingested more than one gram of PCB.

There is one other piece of very specific information I wanted to bring forward. It is a question of the concern about cancer. I was particularly interested in that. I am looking for the actual reference here, but if my memory serves me correctly, the longitudinal studies, after 17 years, of the highest level of exposures that we know of, have not confirmed any higher incidence of cancer in that population. I do not give that information to try to suggest that we should not continue to consider this matter with gravity and as a serious exposure because we do not know all the answers. The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) asked a question of the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Blais-Grenier). I think what the Hon. Member should do besides asking the Minister of Environment that question, is to ask the previous Minister of Environment, and perhaps even the next Minister of the Environment or the New Democratic Party critic on the environment, because there is no conclusion at this time. Because of the process which is under way right now, which is supported very strongly by the Minister of the Environment, we hope that an answer will be forthcoming. All of us are waiting for the answer, but we must first have public hearings, look at the technology and arrive at the best conclusion possible. Those things are under way.

If the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) is honest, he will know that one of the difficulties in arriving at a conclusion for disposal is the fact that we have gone through public hearings and we know that there are very few people in Ontario who want to have a chemical waste site next-door to them. There is a very great deal of difficulty in the public's mind, and even in the scientific mind, in deciding what is the best technology to dispose of PCBs and other contaminants. So

we either deny that process or go through it as well as we can and try to arrive at the best possible conclusion. That is precisely what we are doing. We are doing it as quickly as possible. The Hon. Member for Davenport should know that the Government of Ontario has been very much involved in this process, which it initiated, supported and is trying to bring to a satisfactory conclusion as quickly as possible. It is the process itself we are in the midst of right now. It is not a question of addressing the problem but one of trying to deal with it in a fair and reasonable way.

● (1710)

I have been focusing on the PCB problem and I would like to go back a little bit and talk about what the Minister and her Department have been doing in the last few months, as well as the umbrella under which she has been doing it. One of the things that confused me in listening to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition talk about this issue—I am not sure whether he was reading his own speech or whether he had a speech writer—was that either he does not know or else it was just the way he said it, but he was saying that the Minister should bring in a clean air Act. This was a little bit like listening to the Hon. Member for Davenport when he sometimes talks about an environmental contaminants Act. I sometimes wonder if he was ever Minister of the Environment because he does not seem to understand just exactly what that Act does or how it should work. I know he may not have been Minister for very long but he should have a better idea of precisely what is going on than he seems to have judging from some of his questions in the House. But going back to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we do have a Clean Air Act. It is at the disposal of this Minister of the Environment and was at the disposal of the previous Minister of the Environment in order to try at the federal level to control pollution from being spread from province to province and country to country. This Minister is using it and doing so in a very effective and action-oriented way, as against just discussing it. We have that Act and it has regulations.

Quite apart from that, and to offer some support to the Hon. Member for Davenport because he may not have had a full sense of it, I might say that one of the things that the Department of the Environment had, without reference to the Act or the regulations or anything else, were guidelines on how to handle PCBs. It is my understanding that the company transporting PCBs had committed itself to working within the guidelines provided by the Department. I cannot give you the year they were written but they have been out for some time. Clearly the company did not do so or it would not have had the problem.

We have a number of Acts. I mentioned the Environmental Contaminants Act and the Clean Air Act. There is the Pesticide Act. There are Acts such as the Canada Water Act, the Food and Drug Act and the Pest Control Products Act.

One thing that any Minister of the Environment has a problem with is trying to bring together a comprehensive and reasonable plan of action for the literally thousands of new