

Supply—Resources and Development

fire hazard. It would seem to me there are at least two phases of this matter which the research division might investigate. On the one hand, it might gather statistics as to the number of forest fires caused by discarded cigarettes, and on the other hand it might conduct some scientific research into what is contained in these cigarette papers that makes for the difference in burning that my friend from Saskatoon and I found in the experiment we conducted some time ago.

After one of the occasions when I raised this matter in the house I had a communication from one of the big tobacco companies assuring me that there was nothing in the paper used in tailor-made cigarettes that would create any greater fire hazard than the other kind. It was after that that my friend and I conducted the experiment. Other people have spoken to me about the matter and have assured me that there is that difference. I have taken the matter up with the office of the dominion fire commissioner. I have had correspondence with other people in the country who are interested in the question, including officials of the dominion fire chiefs association. I believe there is something here that needs to be investigated.

I know that the dominion fire chiefs association feels that action should be taken. In fact not long ago they passed a resolution which was sent to the government, copies of which were sent to all members of parliament. So far as the office of the dominion fire commissioner is concerned, if I recall correctly, the answer I received from them was that it was difficult to deal with a matter of this kind by legislation. Once upon a time that view was taken with respect to matches, but now we have legislation to reduce the fire hazard in matches. Although there might be a pretty high-powered lobby against such legislation, I submit it is in the national interest that this matter should be investigated. I must say I was not greatly impressed by the letters we had a short while ago from one of the tobacco companies urging us to get behind fire prevention week because I have noted a lack of co-operation on the part of the tobacco companies with the fire prevention people in connection with this whole matter. There is nothing more I need to say on the subject at the moment, but I should like to have an answer from the minister as to whether any research has been conducted by this division into the two aspects I have mentioned. If not, I hope that he will indicate that these people will make some study of the matter.

Mr. Winters: Mr. Chairman, we all know that cigarettes are one of the causes of fire.

[Mr. Knowles.]

The department is doing everything it can, in co-operation with the provincial governments, to create an awareness in the minds of the people of Canada of the serious loss that results every year from forest fires. The manufacturers of cigarettes are co-operating in that work, and I think perhaps they are helping to create an awareness of the problem. The actual work on development of a cigarette that will not be so dangerous in the woods is something that I think is beyond the jurisdiction of this department, and in fact we have not undertaken any work on the problem.

Mr. Knowles: I remind the minister that that used to be the argument against safety matches, but the day came when there was legislation in that field, and I think the day should come when we will have legislation in this field as well.

Mr. Brooks: I should like to ask the minister whether anything is being done about the spruce budworm infestation in the different provinces and also as to dieback disease which infests birch trees particularly in the maritime provinces.

Mr. Winters: There is a forest insects control board which is active in the field of trying to combat this pest. The work is done by the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Brooks: It is not under this item?

Mr. Winters: No.

Mr. Herridge: I do not take quite the same attitude as the hon. member who was talking about what our research people are doing. Personally I think they are doing an excellent job. I keep pretty well informed of the major projects that are being undertaken. I want to repeat one criticism, and the only criticism I have ever made of this department. They are not getting the information over to the Canadian public. I know that information is published in the trade journals about the projects that are being carried on. I take the lumbermen's magazine, and I presume the hon. member who has spoken also does. There is a limited circulation of some of the information, but I think it is so vital to create an interest in forest conservation and the use of forest products that some scheme should be found to make the public aware of what is being done. The information should also go to the high schools of this country. A great deal of valuable work is being done but it is not appreciated by the majority of Canadians.

Mr. Murray (Cariboo): This is a good opportunity for the national film board.