

Adjournment Debate

HERBICIDES—USE OF WEED KILLER 2,4-D

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Madam Speaker, as I was sitting here this evening, I wondered if you happened to be now or whether you had ever been a member of a service club. I happen to be a member of the Lions International, and I wondered if perhaps you might have been a Lioness. It does not really matter whether Your Honour is a member or have been a member of a service club, I know that you are definitely aware of all of the good works that the service clubs do, whether it be the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Kinsmen, Civitan, Zonta, the Lions or whatever.

I know that you are aware, Madam Speaker, as well, that the main purpose of service clubs is to try to raise money to help the unfortunate, the disabled and to help out in one's own community and in other communities around the world.

Different service clubs have a variety of ways of raising money. For instance, my own club raises money by selling fertilizer every spring. Actually, every spring since 1965 I have been out on the trail in our own community knocking on doors, selling fertilizer. We have found in our community and in our club that the most popular form of fertilizer is, of course, one which contains a weed killer. That is quite understandable because we all know what a problem broad-leaf weeds can be, whether they be dandelions, plantains or whatever. Every spring we have to get out in the yard and dig them out and by late spring they are sprouting again, as they are in the fall. So all of us are interested in having something in the way of a weed killer that gets rid of weeds in our lawns, if we happen to have one.

It came as quite a shock to me to hear that it may very well be that the main weed killer ingredient in those fertilizers, and for that matter the main weed killer for all broad-leaf weeds, 2,4-D, may be banned in this country by the spring. Of course, spring is almost on us. March 21 of this year marks the beginning of spring. So it came as quite a shock to me to learn this information.

I investigated just what was going on. I found that 2,4-D apparently has been suspected of being a cancer-causing agent. That came as a real shock to me because I know that 2,4-D was developed some time after the end of the Second World War. It has been with us now for something in the order of 40 years. Not only is it used on our lawns as a weed killer, it is used by the forest industries to choke out the growth that may destroy young plants and young trees that are coming up. It is also used in our agricultural industries to control weeds among our grain crops, crops such as wheat, oats and barley, since apparently they are all forms of grass.

There will be quite an enormous impact on all of us individually in our everyday life at home and in our industries, including food, agriculture and forestry. There will be an enormous impact because I am told that last year there was some 4.5 million kilograms of 2,4-D sprayed on some seven million hectares of land in Canada and that around the world 2,4-D is used in some 1,000 different products. Last year they

had sales around the world amounting to \$14 billion. If the manufacture of 2,4-D is suddenly shut down in the country, it will have an enormous impact upon all our lives.

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I understand that the Province of Ontario and the Province of New Brunswick have already imposed some form of restriction on the sale of 2,4-D. Ontario, for instance, says that it has placed a moratorium on any new products which contain 2,4-D.

Three Departments of the federal Government are investigating the situation—the Department of the Environment, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of National Health and Welfare. They will determine, apparently by spring, whether or not we should be banning 2,4-D in the country. Of course some say that 2,4-D is a pesticide and that it is a health hazard. However, I have been told by others, particularly a good friend and horticulturalist, a broadcaster on the subject of horticulture in Metropolitan Toronto by the name of Art Drysdale, that it is really not a pesticide, that it is really a hormone, and that it does not deserve all the bad publicity which it has been getting.

One way or another, whether it is a health hazard or whether it is a hormone which is not harmful, the federal and provincial Governments are investigating it. I understand that the Americans are also investigating to see whether or not they will shut down and ban the use of 2,4-D.

I hope the Parliamentary Secretary will throw some more light on the subject tonight, because it is of vital importance to all Canadians. Whether we be urban dwellers, whether we work in the forest industry, or whether we work in agriculture, it has a vital impact on all our lives. I am looking forward to hearing from the Parliamentary Secretary what is the latest word on the potential banning of 2,4-D this year.

Mr. Joe Price (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to respond more fully to the question raised by the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) on November 18, 1986.

As the Hon. Member indicated during his question, the herbicide 2,4-D has been registered for use in Canada for approximately 40 years. More recently, a consortium of companies which manufacture and sell 2,4-D formed a task force for the purpose of sponsoring a variety of studies on the chemical.

In June, 1986 the task force submitted to officials of the Health Protection Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare the results of its first long-term feeding study in rats designed to determine the potential of 2,4-D to cause cancer under experimental conditions.

Officials of the Health Protection Branch conducted a comprehensive review of the information made available in the particular study. They concluded that the administration of 2,4-D in a lifetime feeding study to rodents produced a