

*Pest Control Products Act*

every cabinet minister to give high priority to dollars being used on research and development in this country. I hope that Canadians will put sustained pressure on all Members of Parliament to allocate money to research and development so that our youth can respond to the real challenge of choosing these research projects, thus bringing a tremendous economic return to our country.

**Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, my comments on Bill C-45 will be brief. I believe the points to be made have already been argued with some felicity by my colleagues on this side of the House.

We are debating an act to amend the Pest Control Products Act, Bill C-45. The explanatory note points out that the Pest Control Products Act is being amended so that regulations under it will be applicable to Her Majesty and any agencies of Her Majesty, thereby providing legal authority to control the use of pesticides by departments or agencies of the federal or provincial governments.

At present, Mr. Speaker, as other members have pointed out, the Pest Control Products Act is not legally binding on the federal government and on Crown corporations, nor is it legally binding on provincial governments and their agencies. In effect, what we are doing is broadening the force of the Pest Control Products Act such that it will apply to the provinces and to the federal government, not just to the private sector, I welcome the bill because I think that in many ways it will make the PCPA a more effective instrument of public policy.

● (1530)

I want to stress that we in Canada are blessed with a country that is rich in geography. We are unique in that we are bordered by three oceans. We have more geography in fact, than any other country, except one. While harsh, our climate is nevertheless able to provide us with a healthy quality of life. We derive from our land a standard of living which, because of mismanagement on the part of this government, is falling, but which is still high by practically any reasonable standard. From the beginning, the country has relied on its soil and on the richness of the land, and agriculture remains a major industry. In the Atlantic province, where I come from, it is the main industry.

As the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) pointed out, it behooves us to exercise good stewardship over the land and to manage it so that we can pass it on to future generations in as good shape as we ourselves received it. But the land is now in peril, partly as the result of pesticides.

Some of my colleagues in the House will know that prior to 1940, pesticides were rare in Canada and in the rest of the world. The few that existed were largely ineffective. There were crop losses and declines in productivity due to our inability to control pests. Crop yields were much lower than they are today. The development of pesticides and related products has greatly improved yields since then.

The rapid rate of development of pesticides came around 1945, when progress in chemistry provided effective pest con-

trol products. This helped immensely to increase crop productivity and to give us access to a wider range of foods than had hitherto been possible.

Pesticides are not only useful in the production of fruit and vegetables; they also serve to protect livestock from biting flies and other parasites. Development in that area has had an important effect on the development of better animal health and on enhanced meat and milk production. There are now something like 500 different pesticides on the market, whereas in 1940 there were probably only a few dozen. Each of these pesticides plays a distinct role and many are essential to food production. Although pesticides have played a large role in the success of agriculture, they have also caused disasters. A few of the problems that result from the use of pesticides have been resolved but many remain to be dealt with.

Science has allowed us to develop more and more chemicals—pesticides and others—but this progress has outstripped our capacity to manage those chemicals effectively in order to protect the environment against their adverse effects.

If we can do nothing else in this country except restore some of that imbalance, we will have gone a long way toward proper husbandry of our natural resources.

A major point that needs to be stressed is that we cannot continue to go on as we have done, relying on other countries for research and development in the pesticide area. A certain report has been in the public domain for a few years now, authored by Dr. T. H. B. Symons of Trent University. It is the Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies. In great detail the report shows the extent to which our country has indigenous and distinctive research needs which must be responded to by government, the universities and other bodies. In the past we have relied too much on the qualified personnel and scientific enterprise of other countries. We cannot continue to rely on foreign research, Mr. Speaker. Our needs are distinctive and in the context of pesticides, it must be acknowledged that many of our crops are distinctively Canadian. It seems to me that it is in our own environment that we must determine the safety of pesticides for the sake of man and his physical surroundings.

The extent to which we have fallen into the trap of over-reliance on foreign data has been well documented by speakers who preceded me. I shall not go into detail on that subject except to say that the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration combined to audit something like 82 laboratories which were conducting research on pesticides in that country from 1977 to 1980. Of those 82, about 25 were found to have serious deficiencies in their work. Minor problems were found in the work done by all but two of the remaining laboratories. There is a report on the performance levels of the different laboratories and the problems found in each.

I will not quote from the report at any length other than to give one fairly typical example. It concerns the Harris Laboratory of Lincoln, Nebraska. The Environmental Protection Agency found that the record keeping there was poor and that scientific reports were missing. It found that rats used for