

Oral Questions

Mr. MacEachen:—lower interest rates in the future, and that young people will be able to—

Mr. Clark: Let them give one million bucks to Maurice Strong.

Mr. MacEachen:—to provide for home ownership, then they ought to get behind the battle I am fighting against inflation in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**FUNGICIDE CAPTAN—RECOMMENDATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE**

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Department of National Health and Welfare made certain recommendations to the Department of Agriculture concerning the use of the fungicide Captan, which is apparently strongly linked to cancer, birth deformities, and miscarriages. Will the minister make public the recommendations of her department to the Department of Agriculture? Will she also state what her own department will do to control the use of Captan in such non-agricultural uses as wallpaper, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I have no hesitation in making public the letter and the recommendations which I sent to my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, and also, if required—and if the Minister of Agriculture feels this appropriate since he is in a client relationship with my department—in making public also the basic study which gives an update of scientific literature about the dangers of the fungicide Captan which are known at the present time, and in this regard, I do not agree with the preamble of the hon. member. However, if we are to follow the rules of the game, this question would be better addressed to the Minister of Agriculture himself since he has the legal responsibility to publish these documents. I would certainly not object to it.

[English]

Mr. de Jong: Madam Speaker, in fact the Minister of Agriculture was asked and, as usual, he gave an answer which nobody quite understands yet.

ROLE PLAYED BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): My supplementary question is directed to the same minister. On May 22 the Minister of Agriculture established a 17-member committee to

review the Captan issue and other issues relating to fungicides, herbicides, etc. Does this new committee replace the role the Department of National Health and Welfare has played in terms of its recommendations for the registration of these chemicals? If so, what new technology and what new capacity would this committee bring to the job that the Department of National Health and Welfare does not have?

• (1430)

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, Madam Speaker. The role of Health and Welfare is quite clear. I am looking into the eventual need of making the procedure for giving health advice more stringent and formal. Our role is not replaced by that committee. If the hon. member had read the press release it would be absolutely obvious to him that my advice to the agriculture department concerns the exact state of knowledge we have with regard to Captan, and any recommendations. The basic recommendation is to ban Captan from domestic household use—and there was a wide misinterpretation of what I had recommended—because of small open spaces in city gardens where children and, perhaps, pregnant mothers may be exposed to it. So we want to ban the household use of Captan and not its use by farmers in wide open spaces, and according to more strict control and eventual limitation of its use. It is not a ban which we are recommending for farmers. Rather, the committee will study other recommendations which will change the use of a great many of these products.

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THE ADMINISTRATION**RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHEMICALS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. What we have here is a special committee established by the Department of Agriculture which seems to all of us to begin to replace what the Department of Health should be doing, despite what the Minister of National Health and Welfare has just said. As well, the Minister of the Environment, in a news release of March 31, 1981, stated that his department will become thoroughly involved with toxic materials and that it would become a major priority of his department—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. de Jong: The Minister of the Environment states that he is concerned about toxic materials which are not even included for discussion by the committee established by the Minister of Agriculture. The Department of Health is really being ignored. Who is in charge of the question of chemicals and toxic substances in Canada?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, since this particular chemical substance is used in relation to agriculture it was deemed that the Minister of