

Mr. Jefferson: By the Department of Agriculture in whatever manner.

Senator Haig: Then it comes to the Health and Welfare first and then you find the residue is excessive and you advise the Department of Agriculture and they get in the act?

Mr. Jefferson: Yes, we have a procedure now of co-ordination of activities between the Department of National Health and Welfare and initial inspection agencies which are also providing information on these pesticides. We think we know generally what the implications are in terms of excessive residues. We do not anticipate a basis whereby we will have very many cases, but let me turn this around as to what can happen. There is a move afoot now in the international sectors, to establish tolerance levels for international trading purposes. Let us say that where we have been operating with a tolerance level of seven parts per million of DDT, which on the health standpoint of our people's assessment in the National Health and Welfare, is admissible. It accommodates our agricultural production requirements for that pesticide. Through the international consideration of this matter the tolerance is reduced, say, to one part per million and this is as a result of a consensus and we have to accept that, then perhaps the residues that are occurring while we are well within the seven parts per million tolerance are over the one part per million tolerance. This would create a situation again where the producer is blameless but caught. We have not been able to change the recommendations for use fast enough so that he can develop a new use pattern or use alternative products and avoid exceeding that one part per million tolerance.

The Chairman: You are talking about two different things. You are talking about international trade now. If you have international trade regulations—let us say the degree of tolerance of food products passing from one country to another, such as one or two parts per million and you have here where the Department of National Health and Welfare says that as far as Canadians are concerned, such as 30 people, you can have seven parts. You then have the farmer in a bind. He cannot operate in the international field.

Mr. Jefferson: The point I was making, Mr. chairman, was as a result of this international activity where the domestic tolerance is reduced to one part per million.

The Chairman: What is the justification for doing that? If the Department of National Health and Welfare is satisfied that the Canadian can accommodate himself to seven parts of DDT to a million gallons is it, or to a million what?

Mr. Jefferson: A million parts.

The Chairman: A million parts.

Mr. Jefferson: One pound in a million pounds.

The Chairman: If he can accommodate himself to that and it does not damage his system in any way then by what authority, just because there is an international agreement are you going to put him in the position where he suffers loss and cannot trade internationally? He has followed Canadian acceptable standards. Are these standards something you run up and down like playing with a yo-yo? It has got me puzzled at the moment.

Mr. Jefferson: Mr. Chairman, I might try and explain that this is not easy. It is not a black and white situation. The tolerance of, shall we say, DDT at seven parts per million does not really matter, but it will serve to illustrate the assessment of the acceptability of that in terms of the current criteria for measuring the hazard. It may show that there is a one hundredfold or one thousandfold safety factor relative to a person eating that food with that level in it for his whole lifetime, whatever the lifetime is and there is evidence that it would be of no consequence.

But new information could come along, through research, that shows that perhaps at that concentration a person's behaviour changes, or it effects the third or the fourth or the fifth generation, some way. But they are so "way out", the facts, or the possibilities, that at any given time one cannot crystal ball the future with that degree of accuracy. So it is the assessment of this kind of thing that can change. It is happening with smoking, as you are all aware, and it is happening with many other things. It is not possible to say that a level of seven is safe and that eight is harmful, but for administrative purposes you have to draw a line somewhere. The question is, how do you draw it?

It would be better, of course, if someone from the Department of National Health and Welfare spoke to this, than I; but my understanding of the thing is that we will say that the line is drawn at seven parts per million in this example I am using.