

followed in the areas of pharmaceuticals, herbicides, pesticides, etc. I have drawn to the attention of the government the fact that an outfit called International Biotest Laboratories in the United States, in testing most of the herbicides and pesticides used in Canada today, has deliberately falsified its data. Yet the United States government accepted that data and registered most of the herbicides and pesticides that are on the market today.

Recently I put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare about the testing of pharmaceuticals. From freedom of information data obtained in the United States, it was revealed that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had done a random sampling of 10 per cent of companies and individuals that tested pharmaceuticals and had found that approximately 45 per cent of them did not have good laboratory practices. In fact, because of its investigation it declassified 10 per cent of the companies and individuals that were testing pharmaceuticals.

There is a basic problem in the testing of individual chemical products put on the market every year, and there are thousands of them, Mr. Speaker. The testing has not been adequate or honest. If a problem occurs, very often the government is the last to hear about it. We have found that remedial action by government departments is slow. That is illustrated by the history of urea formaldehyde during the 1970s when various tests showed there was a problem with it. Different government departments ignored the test results and did not act upon them. Even the National Research Council warned the government about it but that warning was ignored. We need a total re-evaluation of the way new products are tested and how the results of those tests are made available to government departments.

I commend my friends to the right for the initiative they have shown in taking up this issue, Mr. Speaker. However, in the short period that they were in government I brought the problem of urea formaldehyde to their attention. During question period on October 22, 1979, I put a question to the then Minister of Regional Economic Expansion who was also in charge of CHIP and CMHC as follows:

Have other materials, such as styrofoam and treated wood-shavings, been subject to testing methods, and are there any testing procedures to ensure that urea-based foams do not give off highly toxic formaldehyde gas after insulation?

The minister replied:

The testing has been done in the past for CMHC by the Ontario Research Foundation. CMHC in itself has not taken part directly in the testing but has had to take their word for the results obtained.

We are looking into all aspects of this very important program. It has been generously funded. We hope to improve its administration as more experience is gained.

At the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs on November 2, 1979 I put the following question to the Conservative minister:

Were there any studies as well conducted with formaldehyde insulation materials in terms of whether they do throw off toxic fumes and whether this is much of a danger?

He replied in part:

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

However, I never had anyone talk to me about this rather exotic-sounding insulation. You brought it up in the House and I am sure some of our officials have looked into it.

Then I turned to the official from CMHC who was present and the following exchange took place:

MR. DE JONG: Are the people in CMHC aware of the problem with foam?

MR. HESSION: Specifically the urea formaldehyde?

MR. DE JONG: Yes.

MR. HESSION: Yes, we are. I think you were inquiring as to the degree of testing there. I think more particularly the standard that is in existence is in the order of a one-part-per-million requirement, which, in the extreme, has suggested to our professional staff, our technical staff, that the toxic difficulty is minimal in this country.

Those were the answers we were getting from government officials when the Conservatives were in power, Mr. Speaker. When I asked particularly about urea formaldehyde at that committee, the minister turned the question over to Mr. Hession, who replied:

I want to assure the member that there are literally thousands of materials every year, new materials, coming into the market, and we make it our business, before accepting them, to be satisfied, either through the industry's own testing or through the testing of third parties, that they are acceptable in professional technical terms.

Those were the answers we were getting not too long ago. I am glad to see the conversion of hon. members opposite to the realization that a problem exists. I am also glad to see that there has been some enlightenment of members of the opposition as well. My short experience in the House has shown that as soon as either party sits in opposition, certain enlightenment occurs and they become good, honest advocates; but once they cross the floor everything seems to be "I'm all right, Jack". In fact, the questions we are hearing from the right now were being stonewalled by them when they were sitting opposite. I must surmise that when hon. members opposite were on this side they were asking the same questions and championing the same sort of causes. But strange things seem to happen when either party crosses the aisle.

Enough politics have been played with this very serious problem, Mr. Speaker. People are angry, and they have every reason to be, at the fumbling and mismanagement and at different departments making conflicting statements. People are seeing the value of their homes being destroyed, and they are angry because they do not see any clear and positive direction which the government is following. They see mass confusion, attempts to evade responsibility, and continued flight into bad weather, as my colleague says.

● (1700)

I suggest first of all, Mr. Speaker, that the government meet with the citizens concerned. That surely should be obvious as requirement number one; an honest dialogue with those citizens who are losing their homes. Second, the minister should withdraw the bill until he has heard from his own advisory council. Third, the minister and his officials should meet with their provincial counterparts. Then he should come back to the House with a bill which has had input from those three groups of people.