

Oral Questions

Miss MacDonald: Whose direction are they acting under? If they are not being directed, what steps are being taken to see that they are publicly and quickly reprimanded for the steps they are taking in interfering in the British parliamentary system?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the only officials I know who are trying to put pressure on the British government are a few officials who were appointed to London by some provincial governments. Mr. Loiselle, appointed by the Quebec government, has said that he is attempting to do that. We take the view that this is pure colonialism, and no person in my government—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau:—and no official responsible to this government has the authority to beg anything of the British Parliament in this respect.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**SHIPMENT OF VITAVAX PESTICIDE TO NEPAL AND INDIA**

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, I direct my question to his parliamentary secretary, whose office I phoned earlier today in order to give notice of the subject matter I would be raising this afternoon.

During the month of September, 1980, 15 metric tons of the pesticide Vitavax was shipped to Nepal and India as a donation through CIDA. I would like to know why the department is shipping this potentially hazardous chemical to Third World countries, considering that at present there is a judicial inquiry being held in Manitoba into the death of a farmer exposed to Vitavax. His death has been attributed by the medical examiner to Vitavax. Also it has been alleged by Uniroyal, the company involved, as well as federal government departments, that the Manitoba farmer did not read the label properly and did not use the proper clothing. If Vitavax requires such extreme caution in handling, how does the Department of External Affairs imagine that agricultural workers in India or Nepal could handle it safely? Has the department informed the countries involved of the potential health hazards of Vitavax?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, like many of us I have read the clippings attributed to the hon. member in the newspapers this morning which amplify what he said at the Standing Committee on Agriculture yesterday. He suggested that Canada has done damage to the people of the Third World by sending them some pesticides which we see fit to use in Canada.

● (1440)

I take exception to the incredible question which the hon. member has raised. By way of consequence the hon. member has suggested that the Canadian government has such a policy toward the Third World countries. He has suggested in a very paternalistic way that the people of India and Nepal are not sophisticated enough to use properly the pesticides which we use in Canada. Is the hon. member suggesting that there should not be rural electrification because of the possibility of electrical shock? What exactly is he suggesting?

Mr. de Jong: Madam Speaker, what I am suggesting is that the darned government be realistic about the realities in Third World countries.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: Father knows best.

Mr. de Jong: My supplementary concerns the effectiveness of Vitavax in agriculture. Today in Saskatchewan there are 500,000 pounds of rapeseed treated with Vitavax which has a germination rate of 10 per cent. I wonder if the Department of Agriculture advised the department of foreign affairs to inform Nepal and India that the rapeseed only has a germination rate of 10 per cent, and that if Vitavax is used extensively in those countries, there could be a famine. I wonder how the government would explain that reality.

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, it is essential to clarify the fact that the reasoning of the hon. member is based on the conclusion that the death of a farmer in Manitoba was directly connected to the use or misuse of Vitavax.

Mr. de Jong: Talk about germination.

Miss Bégin: That death has not been connected to the use of Vitavax or products containing lindane. This fact should be established first and an inquiry is under way right now. The hon. member should tell the whole truth, including the fact that the liver analysis showed only six parts of lindane per billion, which is inconsistent with the conclusion that the person was a victim of an overdose. One must not draw conclusions based on a single fact with no correlation to other known facts which would apply to the sending of pesticides to the Third World. I believe that this is unacceptable intellectually.

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[Translation]

POST OFFICE

POSSIBLE ISSUANCE OF STAMP COMMEMORATING LATE RIGHT HON. JULES LÉGER

Mr. Pierre Gimaïel (Lac-Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. In view of the death of the Right Hon. Jules Léger, whom I have personally always considered a great Canadian and whom most Canadians have