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It is now widely accepted that vinyl chloride, a colourless gas that is the basic ingredient in the poly-chloride-vinyl industry, is the cause of an increasing number of cases of angio-sarcoma of the liver. There is also great concern expressed that poly-chloride-vinyl present in containers and plastic wraps for food and drinks can leach into these food products and could cause cancer, birth defects, and diseases of the liver and kidneys.

What should be more alarming is the failure in the past of adequate screening and testing of toxic substances on the market and detecting them before they reach the air we breathe and the food we eat. It appears that most of the Canadian decisions relating to environmental pollutants and their maximum permissible levels are based upon work done by American scientists and regulations made by the health authorities in Washington.

I believe Canadian health authorities should take greater initiatives in starting investigations and making regulations by using more Canadian expertise instead of waiting and sometimes blindly following foreign sources. It is high time that we in Canada re-examine the present approach to public health, the present state of toxicology, the present anti-pollution laws. We must do better to prevent new toxic substances from entering the environment, as well as examining present pollutants, food additives, and drugs. Further delay in taking appropriate action will only compound our problems and cause irreparable damage. We cannot wait much longer before other disasters strike an unprepared public.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has identified an area which is right in the front of concern in Canada today. Before I turn to it, I know the hon. member will agree with me that in general, Canada does not ignore problems of pollution. In fact, in establishing legal frameworks and technological advances, Canada is a world leader.

The Department of National Health and Welfare, as the hon. member will certainly recall, is moving in its new perspectives on health to an ever greater concern for environment as a cause of illness. We look forward to even greater concerns from the department for advancing Canadian health through activities directed at the environment.

To deal with the matter of PCBs, I am glad to have the opportunity to bring new and important information to the attention of hon. members.

On October 3, 1975, the Ontario ministry of health recommended that Coho salmon caught in the Credit River should not be eaten more than once a week and that pregnant women should not eat the fish. This action was taken because residue levels of up to 20 ppm were being found in edible portions of Coho salmon. There is no commercial fishing that we know of there, but some are caught and eaten by sportsmen.

Surveys by the Fisheries Inspection Branch, Environment Canada, indicate that saltwater fish and most freshwater fish contain residues of PCBs well below 5 ppm. Surveys by the Health Protection Branch show that con-

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tamination of other foods with PCBs such as dairy products, eggs, and poultry is consistently low and often not detectable.

The U.S. food and drug administration set a tolerance for PCB's in fish of 5 ppm in 1972 based on the limited toxicological data available at that time. But it must be pointed out that much more information bearing on the safety of PCBs is now becoming available. Departmental officials did not recommend tolerance levels at that time because there was insufficient monitoring and toxicological data then available to make meaningful recommendations based on sound science. They have been working hard to acquire such data and have expanded their contacts with scientists around the world who are concerned about PCBs.

It is important that Canada should undertake its own research, as the hon. member has suggested, and as he knows we do, but at the same time we should not ignore international research activity.

Two major international meetings, one sponsored by the World Health Organization and the other by the U.S. Environmental Agency, are being held within the next two months to assess the PCB problem. It had been hoped we could await the outcome of these meetings before setting legal tolerances for PCBs in fish, in order to collate world knowledge in this area. In the light of our examination of the unpublished U.S. data, however, the matter appears to be too urgent to wait for the outcome of these meetings. Consequently, officers of the department are meeting with officers of the Fisheries and Marine Services, Environment Canada, to discuss immediate action. These discussions are now in progress and it is hoped the minister will be able to propose tolerances for PCBs in Canadian foods within the next few days.

FISHERIES—POSSIBLE DISCUSSION OF EXTENSION OF CONTROL OVER RESOURCES WITH UNITED STATES

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Saint-Michel (Miss Bégin) on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

I find it difficult to reconcile the position of Canada in its relationship with the United States as it applies to a unilateral declaration of a 200 mile fisheries zone—I repeat, Mr. Speaker, a fisheries zone, not a 200-mile economic zone or an extension to our continental shelf which we all agree will hopefully come about as a result of further negotiations.

As a result of recent discussions between the minister and his colleagues with the United States foreign affairs secretary, certain matters were discussed relating to fisheries and subsequently, according to press reports, Mr. Kissinger stated that the U.S. agrees with Canada's position regarding further negotiations to achieve its ultimate goals. But what was left unsaid—and still remains unanswered—is what discussions took place with regard to the bill which stands before the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Congress of the United States—Bill HR 200 entitled "The Establishment of United States Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone extending to