

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Olson: No, Mr. Speaker. I do not think there has been a substantial increase in technicians assigned to this task. However, I should advise the Leader of the Opposition that we have made some changes very recently in the recommendations or the purposes for which these particular chemicals will be licensed.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, one further question with regard to 2-4D which is now useable in Canada only for certain restricted purposes. I should like to ask the minister whether he has considered any new evidence of increasingly serious effects of the use of this chemical and whether his department is considering abandoning completely the use of 2-4D and related chemicals?

Mr. Olson: No, Mr. Speaker, we are not seriously considering banning them entirely. I should advise, however, that wherever we find there is any risk to human health in the residue that may be found in any food or where they may find their way into the food chain, we are severely restricting the licensing of them for uses that would have that result.

ADEQUATE RESEARCH PRIOR TO MARKETING OF NEW CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question of the Minister of National Health and Welfare on the same subject. Is the government considering any regulations to prohibit the marketing of any new or changed chemical products until such time as more adequate research is done as to their effects either on the food chain or in other ways ecologically?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the department, especially during the last year, has been increasingly concerned about these chemicals and we are reviewing the whole situation to ascertain what greater precautions can be taken.

PRESENCE OF MERCURY IN ALBERTA PHEASANTS AND HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary Centre): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Has the use of the chemicals which rendered pheasant and Hungarian partridge in southern Alberta unfit for human consumption been banned?

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Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): No, Mr. Speaker. The residue of the chemical that was found in those birds was mercury and thus far we have been unable to determine where the birds obtained it, whether it was from treated seed, which is a common use of mercury, or from some other source. As the hon. member knows, there has been a ban on the hunting of these birds, and therefore presumably on their consumption by humans, until the place where this mercury entered their diet can be determined.

Mr. Harkness: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Have any steps been taken to have the chemical companies substitute some other type of product than a mercury compound for the treatment of seeds?

Mr. Olson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of chemicals now available that are suitable alternatives to the use of mercury in treating for "smut" and "bunt".

STUDY OF EFFECTS OF USE OF TORDON AS DEFOLIANT

Mr. Bruce Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Speaker, concerning the chemical, Tordon, that is used as a defoliant along the Canada-United States border. Have there been any new studies on the possible dangers arising from the fact that this chemical may be getting into water supplies along the Canada-United States border?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Food and Drug Directorate has been concerned in this area and is reviewing the situation. As soon as I have anything more definite to report, I shall make a statement to that effect in the House.

ALTERNATIVE CHEMICAL TO 2-4-5T

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): A supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Are active investigations going on to find an alternative chemical to 2-4-5T so that this chemical, in view of its very bad record, need not be used in the future?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is erroneous to say that it has a very bad record. This particular chemical has not been found in any form in any food. As I pointed out to the