

feasibility of having our own research and lab facilities in Canada in the field of toxicology.

I have brought to the attention of the government the ongoing study and review of the International Bio-Test Laboratories of the United States which, in 1977, were found to have deliberately falsified and shredded its tests on various chemicals. In fact most of the pesticides available in this country today were tested by the IBT labs, and those tests, which allowed for the registration of those chemicals in this country, were proven to be false and misleading. It was a very serious situation and it continues to be so because these particular pesticides continue to be used in Canada today. There does not exist comprehensive valid studies to show that these particular pesticides are not dangerous to the users and to the consumers in our country.

It seemed to me to be very logical to ask the question: why do we not develop our own centres of toxicology in Canada so that we are not dependent on labs such as the IBT laboratories which have shown themselves not to be very dependable? In fact, Mr. Speaker, in committee a member of the department admitted that it is costing \$100 million to redo the tests originally done by IBT. This is not \$100 million that the Government of Canada is spending, but it is \$100 million that the consumers of Canada will eventually have to pay. At the time the minister suggested I was a bit naive in asking for our own centres of toxicology as we are a small country. I admit that in population we are a very small country compared to the United States and a number of European countries. She suggested, therefore, that we had to continue to rely upon the data we got from these independent labs, mainly in the United States.

● (2220)

I understand it would come close to \$8 million a year over a five-year period of core funding from the government to guarantee or to enable us to set up a centre of toxicology that could effectively run tests on many of the chemicals that come on the market in this country. I am sure that even with \$8 million over a five-year period we could not establish a centre of toxicology that would do proper studies on all the chemicals that come on the market.

Every year hundreds of new chemicals are introduced. We have to take the studies which the manufacturers of these chemicals present to us. We have to accept their word very often that these chemicals are not hazardous to the Canadian consumer and to the user. We have seen that we cannot very well depend upon the reliability of these studies. It makes a lot of sense for us as a country to take an active part in developing centres of toxicology. If we as a country cannot afford to do the whole job ourselves, then we have to join with other countries, either through the United Nations or outside of it, to develop some international laboratory capacity so that we are not dependent upon private labs, so that we know there are laboratories whose results we can trust.

As we go further into the chemical society, if we cannot trust the labs which tell us whether these chemicals are safe

for us, then we are in a very sorry state. If it is up to the government, which in the long run has responsibility for guaranteeing the health and safety of the Canadian public, to ensure there are labs in this country or in the world whose results we can trust.

It might be a question of money, but as the case of IBT labs has shown, it is costing over \$100 million to review and redo these tests. It is something that eventually the Canadian consumer will have to pay. Why not take the more logical step? Why not develop our own capacity for doing these tests? In the long run it would save the Canadian consumer money. If there were a centre of toxicology in this country I am sure that other countries would use our lab facilities. In fact, I assume that after five or six years such a centre for the study of toxicology would make money for this country.

I wish to use this opportunity tonight to urge the government to consider seriously problems that it has had with private labs in the past. IBT is not the only lab. I ask it to consider seriously recommendations which, I understand, its own bureaucrats have made; I ask it to consider seriously supporting one or two universities across this country so that we can have our own independent source of study and so that we, as Canadian people, might be assured that the chemicals we are using are, indeed, safe.

● (2225)

Mr. David Weatherhead (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) has asked several questions recently on the safety of pesticides tested by Industrial Biotest Laboratories of Chicago, Illinois.

On June 23 the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) issued a press release outlining the problem and listing the chemicals tested by IBT. In addition the minister has informed the provincial ministers of health, environment and agriculture and their counterparts in the Territories regarding this problem.

I wish to inform the House that the minister and the Department of National Health and Welfare are acutely aware of the shortage in Canada of trained toxicologists and facilities to conduct studies to assess the safety of chemicals. As a partial solution to this problem the department has played an active role in the establishment of an international program on chemical safety under the auspices of the World Health Organization. The department is assisting through direct funding of this program, as well as playing a leading role in the safety evaluation of agricultural chemicals and certain food additives. This program will provide Canada with access to expertise in other countries and will permit international collaboration on the safety evaluation of chemicals.

The department is committed also to the work of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development which is involved in developing improved means of detecting potential adverse effects of chemicals and in ensuring that the quality of scientific investigations will be satisfactory.