

Pesticide Residue Contamination

offences. It must be remembered that we are trying to control the use of chemicals and before considering this punishment we ought to consider what methods we might adopt to persuade individuals not to infringe the provisions of this bill. Civil action might be contemplated. If someone disobeys the law, then his product ought to be seized, perhaps. Controls might be imposed on products manufactured in plants. Similar steps might be taken with regard to farmers. But do not approach manufacturers, farmers or distributors on the basis that if they disobey this law they are criminals and should be punished.

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak for a few moments to the amendment put forward by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. Hon. members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition are prepared to support his amendment.

I wish to speak about the workings of the committee that dealt with this measure and to say why it ought not to have been necessary to bring this amendment before the house at this time. We are operating under the new rules, Mr. Speaker, and at present we are dealing with one of the first pieces of legislation brought before the Standing Committee on Agriculture to be dealt with in accordance with the new rules. In that committee we were favoured, as in the past, by presentations of witnesses from the Department of Agriculture. They were called before the committee and answered all questions put to them by committee members about the matter being considered at that time. In fairness, we must pay special tribute to those officers of the department, not only for the concise and intelligent manner in which they answered all questions, but also for their patience in trying to assist us in every possible way to get at the root of the matter before us.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks with regard to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and the part he played in the proceedings, even though there is no definite provision in the new rules that a minister must be in attendance at committee hearings. Over the past number of years it has been a bone of contention with members of standing committees that usually a minister appeared to make an official statement, then left and his departmental officials had the responsibility for the rest of the proceedings. These officials were unable to answer questions on policy and

were compelled to stay strictly within the terms of the legislation or the departmental estimates, as the case might have been. We in the opposition have always felt this placed an unfair burden on the departmental officials. We were agreeably surprised to find that whenever it was possible, the Minister of Agriculture was inclined to appear before our committee, answer all questions directed to him, and speak on behalf of the government that he represents and the department that he has the honour to head.

Having said that, I would like to deal with the actual activity of the committee itself. I do not feel that it is necessary for an amendment of this type to appear before the House of Commons during discussion of the bill at the report stage. I cast no reflection on the hon. member who brought in the amendment. As a matter of fact, I commend him for his action, but if the standing committees of the house are to perform the duties that are expected of them then we should be able to solve differences of opinion in regard to the legislation before us within the committees. We should be able to introduce amendments, arrive at a consensus, so that the report to the house would deal with the very best piece of legislation a committee is able to provide for the citizens of the country.

Why was it necessary for this amendment to come before the house? In my opinion, it is the result of the partisan approach of government members to legislation in committees. I say this in a kindly way because I am sure all committee members are anxious to do the best job they can for the people they represent, for the country as a whole, and for their parties. I note that perhaps a lot of the difficulty in this instance was due to the fact that many government members on the committee were not old members of the house—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, and I am anxious to allow him as much leeway as possible in view of the fact that we are operating under new rules. I am sure the house would be interested in his comments, but it is a rule of the house that a member when speaking on an amendment should restrict his remarks to the amendment itself. I do not want to be unnecessarily harsh in the application of this rule, but I would ask the hon. member to come to the exact point before the house as quickly as possible.

Mr. Danforth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your point is very well taken. I am sure I