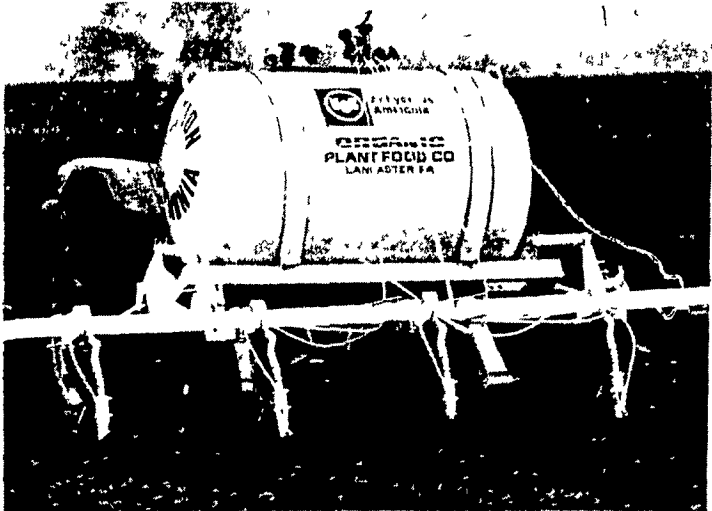


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ED ESHLEMAN'S WASHINGTON REPORT

When the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) passed Congress in 1970, the justification for it was that workers needed Federal protection on their jobs.

There were statistics to support the legislation. The number of job-related injuries, illnesses and deaths was a disturbing figure. And there was reason to believe that some Federal regulation could result in working conditions that would not be as dangerous for employees.

OSHA established the regulations, the bureaucracy and the penalties for job safety and health. But the idea was to protect workers, not to harass business.

Just the opposite has taken place since OSHA went into effect. Many of the safety inspectors provided for under the law seem to put worker concerns in second place behind their interest in proving to businesses that they have some power.

Small businesses throughout the 16th District have been in touch with me saying that the inspectors not only pointed out hazards and violations on their first visit, but imposed fines as well. It is hard to call such actions anything by harassment.

I certainly think that the in-

spectors should carefully check out working conditions on their first visit and tell the owner or manager to correct anything that doesn't meet the standards required by law. But no fines should be imposed unless there is a refusal to make the corrections or unless on a second visit the same conditions are present.

The harassment that has been taking place is particularly bad considering that thousands of businesses apparently were never informed of OSHA's provisions. One of the first things that the people running the safety and health program were supposed to do was contact everyone who would be regulated by OSHA and tell them what was required. But evidently this information process was pretty slipshod since hundreds of businessmen have been in touch with me to find out what OSHA is all about. They had never received word about it from the Labor Department.

Now there are several bills before Congress to amend OSHA and essentially water down its provisions. There will be a good deal of support for that kind of action given the way that the program is being administered.

Personally, I'd like to see us keep our commitment to better

safety and health conditions for American workers. But I'm not going to support a program that forgets its main function and concentrates energies on harassment of responsible businessmen, particularly those with small businesses.

I have an idea all that may be needed to make OSHA work right is to see that safety inspectors realize they are public servants and not miniature dictators. If the people who administer the law would just be as reasonable as those who made the law hoped they would be, I think it might accomplish some good without being a businessman's nightmare.

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