

of a great majority of the officers was never abused; but after some years of experience it was found desirable to make a rule that the Inspectors were not to undertake prosecutions without the approval of the Director of the Fields Division, who, before agreeing to legal proceedings, invariably satisfies himself that the circumstances are such as to fully warrant extreme measures before these are taken. This arrangement results in greater uniformity of practice throughout the Dominion, and causes the Inspectors to be very sure that they have a good case before recommending a prosecution. It is not surprising, therefore, that it very seldom happens that legal proceedings taken by the Inspectors are unsuccessful.

It will be observed that the Act provides that where weeds are allowed to flower the Inspector *may* take action. Unfortunately, however, there is a strong body of public opinion which considers that it is the duty of the Department to substitute the word "shall" for the word "may" in this connection. It is, of course, well known that one of the chief difficulties in connection with administering noxious-weeds legislation is that public opinion is sharply divided on the question. Those landholders whose properties are infested to any considerable extent are strongly of the opinion that there should be no Government interference in this matter, and that they should be allowed to deal with their weeds, or neglect them, according to their own sweet will. Consequently they display considerable hostility, and in some cases extreme animus, when the Inspectors make any move in the direction of enforcing the clearing of the weeds. On the other hand, those occupiers whose lands are reasonably free from weeds, and especially those who are in danger of infestation from other properties, are equally vigorous in insisting that the Act should be enforced, some of them even holding that no discretion should be used and that the Inspectors should carry out drastically the powers conferred upon them by the Act. It will therefore be seen that the Department is and must remain in this matter "between the devil and the deep sea." At one time the Department undoubtedly held the view that those landholders who opposed the enforcement of the Act represented the devil; at the present time, however, we recognize that if the opponent of the Act is the devil, at least the devil is not as black as he is painted. In other words, there is a great deal to be said in favour of the view that over wide areas the wholesale cutting of weeds is not only impracticable, but an altogether uneconomical undertaking.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO THE NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT.

In these circumstances I am convinced that some drastic changes in the Act should be made whenever Parliament is in a position to