

Government Orders

Madam Deputy Speaker: When the House rose for lunch the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings had the floor.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, when we recessed for lunch I was in the midst of some comments on Bill C-67, an act entitled the Plant Protection Act. I would like to take a few minutes to continue those comments.

I was in the midst of discussing the powers of inspectors and their ability to establish the quarantine areas that will be allowed under this bill, if it is passed by the Parliament of Canada.

The bill improves the effectiveness of control measures that could very well be necessary in controlling pests, diseases, et cetera, involving plants. In the past, a quarantine area could be established. However, there were not effective measures to allow the restriction of the movement of vehicles and people in and out of the quarantine area. This bill will allow such restrictions to be enforced and put in place.

I explained to the House, and I stress this, that we must be very careful in doing this. When we establish a quarantine area the other thing that this bill does is it enables an inspector to make, if necessary, a fairly large quarantine area. We have to remember that many, if not all, the products produced by the agriculture industry are perishable, and some are more perishable than others, but they are all perishable.

When a quarantine area is established that means product cannot move in or out of that area. If it is a very perishable crop being talked about at the farm level, then a very serious economic effect can take place as far as that farmer's livelihood is concerned, or the livelihood of a business if it happens to be a business, for example, a greenhouse business or something like that.

We must be very careful to realize that there is no provision in this bill to allow for the compensation of revenues that might be lost by someone else within a quarantine area. That can only be done by an ad hoc program that can be put in place by a minister. If a plant or crop has to be destroyed, or if a program has to be put in place to correct the damage that has been done, there is provision for compensation to allow for that.

We must keep in mind that there could very well some detrimental affects to others within a quarantine area who are victims of a circumstance beyond their control. It could, as I say, be very costly to those people.

Another point that I feel we must look at very carefully in this legislation is the government's cost recovery proposal. It would permit the government to recover from any person or any business any of the costs, charges or fees incurred by the government in fulfilment of this bill.

I bring to the attention of the House that this is enabling legislation that gives the minister and the Department of Agriculture *carte blanche*, a blank cheque, to set fees for services performed and to recover those fees. We must keep in mind what such a provision could do. It is not impossible, and I hope it would not happen, that an over-zealous inspector could move in a case where there was a disease or a pest—and there is a good new definition of pest in the bill—on to a site, a farm or business premise and carry out a number of inspections, a number of activities and then later have the opportunity because of this bill to send that person or business a bill.

That is all well and good, if it is an isolated situation where someone has brought something into their business from across the border into our country, for example, plant material that is carrying a disease or a pest that needs to be looked after. I will give a couple of examples on that point.

There are a tremendous number of tomato transplants that are brought into Ontario from the southern United States each year. In 1988, after they started to arrive, even though they had been inspected in the southern states at their place of origin and place of growth, and even though they had been inspected upon their arrival here in Canada, it became known a few weeks later that there was a problem with a bacterial canker in those plants. Federal inspectors did have to go on to farm sites and into fields to inspect to see what damage was there. The job they did had to be done. My concern is that with the fee recoverability in this legislation, the fees for carrying out those tasks could be sent to the grower. I agree that the task that they were doing had to be done. It was a job that they were doing for the total industry