

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

An hon. member: On division.

Motion No. 5 (Mr. Foster) negatived.

• (1650)

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-15 be amended in Clause 77 by striking out line 6 at page 42 and substituting the following therefor:

“(v) the development of sustainable agriculture in Canada,

(vi) any increase or decrease of public research in plant breeding in Canada,

(vii) the transfer of technology to Third World countries and the development of sustainable agriculture in such countries, and”.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 9 deals with a report which is provided for in the bill itself. It is envisaged that this bill, after a period of ten years, would be fully opened up and brought to Parliament for a complete review. I had suggested that this be reduced to seven years. Unfortunately, my committee colleagues did not fully agree with that, so it is a ten-year period.

In order for the House of Commons to review it, there is a provision in the bill that the Minister of Agriculture would prepare a report on the operation of the act and the commissioner's office.

Of course, there are ongoing agreements. The UPOV agreement would, I suppose, be included in any report. In any event, clause 71(2) provides for this report. It is suggested that the report will cover the impact of investment as a result of the operation of the act, that it will deal with improvements in facilities to obtain foreign varieties of plants in Canada, protection abroad for commercial purposes of Canadian plant breeders so that they are able to sell their seed varieties abroad and have proper protection and receive the royalties that are due to them, the improvement of plant varieties and so on.

This amendment would simply add to that list of items the report itself could deal with. Item one is the development of sustainable agriculture in Canada. I believe that biotechnology has a great potential in this country for developing seeds which are more resistant to disease or to pests so that we can do away with a certain amount of pesticides and herbicides. It could have a very beneficial effect on sustainable agriculture in this country.

There is a lot more to sustainable agriculture than simply the reduction of chemicals, pesticides and herbicides, but that is one aspect. I think it would be useful for a committee of the House of Commons in the future to see how beneficial this act has been to sustainable agriculture and what elements of sustainable agriculture it would have an impact on.

The second item is an increase or decrease of public research in plant breeding in Canada. One of the greatest concerns is that the government plans to reduce the amount of public research in the country and essentially privatize. I think the government could show its concern, the minister has indicated that he is prepared to maintain public research in agriculture and plant breeding, by accepting that portion of the amendment. We are only talking here about a report containing information for the benefit of members after a ten-year period of operation of the act.

The third item is the transfer of technology to Third World countries and the development of sustainable agriculture in such countries.

At the second reading debate there was a great deal of concern that big, multi-national corporations would seize the plant breeding capacity in this country and then would exploit it to the disadvantage of Third World countries. At the same time there was concern as to whether the bill would be operated in such a way that there would be a good and a safe transfer of technology to Third World countries.

Surely we have a great responsibility in this country, not only for international development but especially for development of the food-producing capacity of those Third World countries. We should be doing that on the basis of sustained agriculture, not on the basis on which much of the agriculture in North America, the United States and other countries, operates today, which is highly dependent on chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides and so on.