

*Government Orders*

The kind of questions we are being asked about this bill were raised publicly, but they did not get a proper airing in the legislative committee. I submit that the legislative committee is not structured for that kind of thing. It should have been a full public hearing under the aegis of a full royal commission.

In the interest of time, I am recommending that the House consider this resolution positively, that it accept this resolution, this amendment to Bill C-15, which would permit some experimentation with the idea of plant breeders' rights for ornamental plants only. We can then discover whether there are any advantages, economic or otherwise. In the course of doing that sort of an experiment, we will avoid creating difficulty and hardship, both economic and social for those people who depend on plant breeding as a source of nutrition for their very lives.

**Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma):** Mr. Speaker, the motion standing in my name today, Motion No. 3, provides for compulsory licensing and I want to address that matter. Before I do that, I would like to say that this bill received considerable study in committee, however, we did not hear as many witnesses as we would have liked.

I think that the members who served on that committee came out knowing a lot more about the question of plant breeders' rights than when they went into it, because it is an intensely complicated topic. There are new developments every day in the whole field of biotechnology and, for a group of laymen, I think it is a bit mind boggling, but I believe that the committee members learned a great deal. I think that it was useful. We had people from international development groups, representatives from churches and from universities, from research laboratories, from government laboratories, and from farm organizations, a very broad range of people.

This bill, although it is often dealt with as an agriculture bill, has concerns and interests well beyond that. I think the members of our caucus have, in our second reading debate, expressed the concerns of many of the farm groups right across the country. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Federation and other groups across the country are vitally concerned with agriculture and with development in this country.

We think that the bill can make a positive contribution to plant breeding and research in this country. If you look at the situation now, especially with major crops such as cereal grains, most of the research is being done by the federal government. I hope that this legislation, when it is passed and is in operation, not only will continue to support and expand that research which is being done by the federal government laboratories, provincial laboratories and university laboratories, but, as well, will expand the research in the private sector, because it is a very important field, a field in which we want to see research take place. We have had mechanisms in this country to support plant breeders, through organizations like SeCan, which has been able to provide an incentive to the research organizations, especially those at universities and government laboratories.

We have many plant breeders' groups who produce hybrid varieties, especially in cereal grains like corn and, because of the hybridization, are able to get paid for their research, but we have not had a codified law like this plant breeders' rights to provide for that incentive to plant breeders. We have a commitment from the Minister of Agriculture that, in the long run, the government would look at increasing the percentage of research dollars which come back to Department of Agriculture from 60 per cent, which it is today, to 100 per cent of the royalties which are realized.

• (1610)

Some royalties have been realized on the current SeCan arrangement and there will be more. I think the minister and the department estimated something like \$4 million would be realized per year in the long run with the bill in place. This will codify the arrangements which have taken place through SeCan and through the use of hybrid varieties.

This bill was strengthened considerably in committee by a number of amendments. For instance the complaint that we received from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and other groups was that an advisory committee was not mandated with great enough responsibilities. It wanted more input from farm groups and others of a public interest nature on that advisory committee.