

*Government Orders*

case was not made well for plant breeders' rights for any of the crops, but if it was made at all, it was to facilitate trade in the ornamentals.

The purpose of this particular motion is to limit the application of the bill to those kinds of plants and prohibit the use of plant breeders' rights for that type of production that would be used to produce food.

I want to review the basic problems that I have with plant breeders' rights. I think it is unnecessary control of genetic material. There will be a lot of problems with the concept behind plant breeders' rights, that we should have private ownership of life-sustaining material, whether it is plant genetic material or other genetic material. I question whether the House and the committee have done any work to determine whether in fact that is a proper use of the private propriety concept in our world.

I point out to the House that the last time that this question was dealt with in depth was by a royal commission in the late 1950s which recommended against the use of the Patent Act or any form of plant breeders' rights. The legislative committee that this bill was sent to chose, and perhaps it was mandated, to limit itself to only looking at the very narrow legislation itself. It did not choose to call people who had a broader view of life. It did not do the kind of job that a royal commission could do.

I think that the House would be well disposed to accept this amendment. If the government wishes to go beyond this amount of patenting of life forms it should do so only after having resorted to a full public inquiry of the type that a royal commission can conduct. There are a lot of questions about who should own life or whether life can be owned by individuals.

• (1600)

This particular bill does change the assumptions dramatically. It is as big a change as the technical and legal changes that occurred back in the Middle Ages when the western European countries began the process of colonialization and used their system of establishing sovereignty over lands that they discovered, regardless of whether there were societies situated on those newly discovered lands or not. The Europeans simply established their sovereignty and power and colonized those nations.

That is essentially what we are permitting large corporate plant breeding operations to do with this particular bill. I recognize it parallels legislation that is in some

other so-called western countries, but that does not necessarily make it right.

The whole system of colonialization was not fair, nor was it a proper or equitable distribution of power. I do not think that this particular effort to install plant patenting is either.

In the process of looking further afield at the effects of this legislation, I think that a royal commission or a public inquiry should hear from some of the people that we are aware of who are not anxious to have a regime of plant breeders' rights in our country.

A great many of the public plant breeders who privately do not think this is a good idea, but because they are public servants did not come forward to legislative committee hearings should be heard. So should the many farmers and farm groups who think this is a backward step, this business of privatizing genetic material that is often received for nothing from the Third World or the developing world.

They should hear from the environmental and scientific communities who can give us further insight into what this particular move does to our environment and to the future of civilization on this planet.

We should listen to the church and foreign aid groups who wanted to be heard, but very few got the opportunity to make even a brief presentation to the legislative committee.

We should listen as well to Third World development experts who realize that most of the plant genetic resources of our world are found naturally in the Third World. With plant breeders' rights legislation, more developed western countries can go and pick up that genetic material, sometimes licensing it directly, other times through process and manipulation, utilizing the material to produce a new form of material based on it. Yet the donor countries receive no benefit from the use of their resources.

Last, a public inquiry should listen to people who are concerned about ethics and the morality of patenting life forms. This is not just a simple piece of legislation that copies a handful or two of European and American legislation. This is a very fundamental question. We are making a change in the direction of what is, and is not, patentable.