

*Seeds and Grain Acts*

\$350 million in sales annually including domestic and export markets.

Perhaps the most significant change in recent years has been the trend toward privatization of variety ownership. It is a healthy trend and certainly one in keeping with the Government's main thrust and policies. We must continue to support this trend if we are to maintain a quality seed growing industry and a good reputation with our export customers.

This Bill proposes several amendments to the Seeds Act, the most important ones dealing with matters arising out of the privatization trend. Before going into detail, I would like to point out that extensive consultations have been held with all provincial Governments and with all major associations whose members will be affected by this Bill. These groups include the Canadian Seed Growers' Association, the board of which contains representatives from every provincial Government; the Canadian Seed Trade Association; SeCan; and the Canadian Horticultural Council. Our recommendations are well known, well understood and indeed widely accepted.

The most significant provision in the Bill is one to establish more specific regulations for the advertising of seed varieties. I understand that my good friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger), may have some concerns with reference to this particular amendment to the Bill. As he knows, this is a Bill which we are not moving through the House in all stages today. It will simply be moved from here to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I know that that is the appropriate place for discussions of that kind to take place. I know from experience that this Government has utilized that opportunity and made that committee work. Indeed, we have accepted amendments at committee stage before and it might well be the case that, upon evidence submitted by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin, we can clarify or resolve this concern that has been expressed to me.

For some years now, the seed associations have been expressing concern about distorted or even false advertising of so-called varieties. Their interest is understandable because the owners of pedigreed seed have worked hard to acquire registration and deserve protection against those who use variety names to advertise unlicensed seed. In addition, farmers should not have to worry about whether the seeds they are buying are in fact as advertised. This Bill will halt false or distorted advertising practices by providing for the disclosure of certain information when seed is advertised and by prohibiting the use of variety names when seed is not pedigreed.

Tied to this are provisions in the Bill to raise significantly the penalty for violating the Act. The maximum penalty will be raised from \$2,000 to some \$25,000. This new level is a more effective deterrent and I believe more accurately reflects the seriousness with which we regard violations under this Act. We also intend, through the Act, to extend the time period for instituting procedures by way of summary conviction. This will allow more time for proper investigation of complaints and for the initiation of legal proceedings.

The House will note the provision in the Bill of a registration system for crop varieties to replace the present system of prescription. The current administrative procedure which has been in effect since the last amendment in 1959 requires a ministerial order process, and that makes it nearly impossible to keep our list of varieties amended on a day-to-day basis. The proposed registration system will provide for daily amendments to the registry of varieties.

I would also like to highlight a new bonding provision in this Bill. My Department finds that it is frequently necessary to impose bonding requirements on seeds imported into this country and it is a measure by which we ensure that imported seeds meet our requirements. Currently the Government enforces these bonding provisions through the Customs Act which creates some administrative difficulties in my Department. This Bill will provide bonding authority under the Seeds Act.

The remaining provisions of the Bill are relatively minor but are necessary measures for the tightening and updating of the Seeds Act. I will outline them briefly this morning for the benefit of my colleagues.

A provision to modify the definition of the term "sell" in the Act allows for the coverage of contractual agreements. This is recognition of the fact contractual agreements often occur between seed growers and seed companies.

• (1210)

Another provision in the Bill clarifies the role of the Canadian Seed Growers Association in the Act. Members of the House may know that this fine organization has formal responsibility under the Act for the certification of all seed stocks in Canada, except potato and tree seeds.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the provisions contained in this Bill have been required for some time and, therefore, I am anxious to see it passed. I hope all Members of the House will agree that we ought to take every step necessary to protect our fine international reputation as producers of high quality grain. By improving the process for registering seed varieties and by ensuring that farmers are buying legitimate varieties, this Bill will enhance our country's image and build our trade position.

Quality control has been the key to our success in the past and this Bill will help to maintain our high standards. The Food Production and Inspection Branch of my Department is actively involved in quality control through the provision of independent reports on pedigreed seed production.

I am proud too, of the role my Department plays in the development of new seed varieties. Wheat varieties developed by Agriculture Canada account for 90 per cent of Canada's total wheat acreage. I can assure the House that this Government is committed to continued research because we recognize its importance in fostering greater efficiency and improved production. The federal Government, the provinces, seed growers, the suppliers and producers are all partners in the same game. In our common pursuit of quality, we are continually improving crop varieties. That is good business.