

Government Orders

He said: Mr. Speaker, when I spoke previously I outlined that we had passed a fairly extensive amendment to the advisory committee to the commissioner of plant breeders' rights. This amendment would make the establishment of that committee compulsory.

The present legislation provides that the minister may appoint an advisory committee. I think that this is really the key amendment here this afternoon in that the powers of the advisory committee to assist the commissioner of plant breeders' rights have been more clearly defined in amendments which we passed in the committee itself. They are to advise and assist the commissioner on the manner in which the act is to be applied to individual licences or individual royalties on an individual plant variety.

It also gives the advisory committee responsibility to assist the commissioner in requirements relating to licence and to the interpretation of what reasonable pricing is, wide distribution of a plant variety and reasonable remuneration to the person holding the plant breeders' rights.

This is a key amendment. It is my understanding that the government is prepared to accept it. I know it had wide support at the committee stage so I would hope that it would find support all the way around the House this afternoon.

• (1640)

Motion No. 5 puts in place, in a codified way, a provision for ongoing consultation between the Department of Agriculture and the commissioner for plant breeders' rights. There was an agreement signed between the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Department of Agriculture in June 1988 when the previous bill was established which provides for ongoing consultation among the department, the Director of the Competition Act, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Agriculture Canada to ensure that competition continues to apply.

There has been a great deal of concern in the industry, certainly there was in the CFA brief, that there should be an ongoing arrangement. We were finally able to get a copy of that agreement. I think that the protection through the competition policy of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is there, but it seems to me that it is wise to codify it and to put it in the act itself. This agreement may lapse, maybe the Department of

Consumer and Corporate Affairs will have some other name eventually. This ensures that it is in the act itself and is codified.

It simply provides that the commissioner, in consultation with the advisory committee, shall consult with the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs on all matters relating to the administration of the act if such matters could reasonably be considered as being of concern to the said department. This follows closely the written agreement between the two departments.

I hope that the parliamentary secretary, on behalf of the minister, who unfortunately is not here today, will be able to accept this amendment. I think it is useful in reassuring people that the director of investigations and research under the Competition Act will be in constant consultation with the commissioner for plant breeders' rights and will ensure that monopolistic practices do not develop, that consumers' rights, mostly in this case farmers, or people in other sectors of the agriculture industry, are protected and that there are not takeovers or corporate concentration which is harmful to the general public good.

I hope that both of these amendments will get the support of the House and the government this afternoon.

Mr. Brian White (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. Once again I want to express to the member for Algoma my personal support for Motions Nos. 4 and 5, in particular Motion No. 4. I believe the work of the advisory committee is very important in the administration of plant breeders' rights. I believe that in the long-term interests of the administration of the act the formation of the advisory board should be compulsory and I would support that move.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to support both of these amendments that have been put forward. Many times when we debate in the House or in committee we end up on opposite sides of an issue. It seems to me that in this particular case both Motions Nos. 4 and 5 are good examples of how committees do refine and improve legislation.

The legislation currently before us on plant breeders' rights is long overdue and the industry has been requesting it. In this particular case the committee, and indeed my colleague, have done their job in ensuring that