

S. O. 31

like ours. The international union promotes international co-operation in the whole area of plant breeders' rights and seeks to harmonize, where relevant, legislation of its member nations.

I want to briefly mention some of the concerns that have been brought forward by people opposing this sort of legislation in the past. One concern, and we have heard it here today, is that the multinational corporations will get an unfair advantage from this sort of legislation and that small companies may well disappear. I would like to draw attention to some statistics available from other nations. If that sort of trend were going to occur, one would think that it would certainly occur in the Netherlands, a country which has had plant breeders' rights since 1941. However, going by 1988 figures, there are 983 seed trade members in that country. This is a small nation which has had plant breeders' rights since 1941 and there has not been a concentration of power. Quite frankly, it is exactly the opposite.

Individual plant breeders, for example, backyard rose breeders right here in Canada who claim to have varieties ready to release, will not release them because they know they will not gain from their many years of hard work and initiative in developing those new rose varieties. However, they now will have a chance to release them and at least get some modest benefit for their ability and initiative.

This is clearly the sort of thing that has happened in the Netherlands with 983 seed trade members of one type or another. I think that speaks for itself. There are other countries and I will go briefly through them. Denmark, not a big country, has 30 members; France, 469; the United States, 786; Italy, 887, I believe the figure is here. In the countries that have had this form of legislation for many years, the numbers are holding up, and there is certainly no concern whatsoever for corporate concentration in the seeds business.

The Government has committed itself to staying in the development of varieties here in Canada, staying in the public plant breeding. It is very important for people to realize that plant breeding is a multi-faceted undertaking. One area that is very important to plant breeding is developing new plant breeding techniques. This sort of basic research is very expensive and is likely to occur largely in the public sector. Most of the private sector companies involved in plant breeding cannot afford to be

in extensive basic research and new breeding techniques. That must continue to occur in the public sector. Also, the storage and maintenance of various seeds, germplasm and various other forms of plant material will again have to be maintained by government organizations or international foundations of one type or another. That is occurring now. I believe it is very clear to this Government and to the people around the world that that must continue and that commitment is in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I call it one o'clock, the Hon. Member will have seven minutes left plus the 10 minutes of questions and comments after three o'clock.

It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock this day.

At 1 p.m., the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT
APPOINTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, in 1986 New Zealand established a parliamentary commissioner for the environment. The commissioner has the power to ensure that the values of ecosystems, all values which are placed by individuals and groups on the quality of the environment, the sustainability of natural and physical resources, and the needs of future generations are taken into account in managing natural and physical resources.

The commissioner also has the powers of our Auditor General to oversee and review the actions of the Government in the environment and reports to Parliament. Helen Hughes, New Zealand's first commissioner stated: "I believe that the public has a right to expect the government system to be capable of delivering fair, equitable and environmentally sensitive decisions. I am a guardian of that right".