

Seeds and Grain Acts

we were to alienate those markets that are so important to us in other parts of the world.

Even within the seed producing structure, Mr. Speaker, many of the structures which have made our agricultural industry stable, things like the Dairy Commission, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Poultry Commission, stable at least part of the time, are of concern. This situation must be looked at in terms of free trade. It would be very detrimental if we found that these structures were dismantled because the Government did not want to make them part of a protected area in free trade negotiations.

● (1130)

The Government does not have a particularly good record. I suppose we could say that it has a poor record of protection of the agricultural industry when it comes to trade. It has failed to protect us from beef imports from Ireland and the EEC. It has failed to deal with countervailing duties on pork by the United States, although they have been reduced to some extent. It even closed down Canagrex, a Crown corporation which was established with the intention of increasing the sale of agricultural products all over the world. It closed down Canagrex, the marketing agency for Canadian agricultural products, and has failed to put anything in its place. It makes noises about the commercial agencies in each country doing the same work. That might have been acceptable if it had happened, but it has not happened. Consequently, the possibility of increasing our trade with countries other than the United States—and even with the United States—has slowed down. There has not been any action in that direction since the closing down of Canagrex almost a year ago.

Incidentally, we have been awaiting an annual report from Canagrex. It is due, legally, but it has not appeared. In fact, it was due some time ago. I guess we should be asking for it more often than we have.

The Government has been promising—and I see the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) across the way—for some time that it would provide some kind of drought payment for western Canada. That has just not happened. What has happened is that there was a commitment of the Saskatchewan Government and the federal Government of \$90 per head for livestock. That promise of \$60 by the provincial Government and \$30 by the federal Government floundered somewhere along the line. Unfortunately, the Government of Saskatchewan pocketed the \$30, and we have a payment of \$60 per head to stock producers. Grain producers are still waiting for the Government to take some action on the drought relief program.

I have gone over a litany of promises and areas where the Government says that it has done something to help agriculture. In effect there has been no real impact on the viability of the industry. In some cases it has been a situation of too little too late. In other cases it has been a situation of cosmetic changes, which have no impact on the incomes of individual farmers.

One of our concerns with the particular Bill—and I must say that it does not appear as a factor in the Bill and it is not a reason to consider holding it up—is that the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary indicated in their speeches, when they initially spoke to the House on the Bill, that it was an initial step to the establishment of plant breeders' patent legislation. I hesitate to use the term "plant breeders' rights" because I think it is a misnomer, although it has been suggested by the seed industry. I must point out that it is not the small farm seed industry which has been pressing for the Bill. It is the multinational seed industry. Most of the small seed plants in western Canada have been purchased by multinational chemical companies and grain moving companies. In fact, the basic seed industry, the handling of seeds, is gradually going out of the small business area and becoming part of the international agri-business area.

This is a concern which Canadians, particularly seed growers who will be making use of the changes in the Act, should recognize. Even as we tighten up the machinery and the advertising possibilities in the Act, we should be concerned that the Act does not lead to taking away from small seed producers the rights to handle grain and to do the kind of breeding they want to do, which may eventually go to large corporations that in the end do not help producers. Perhaps seed producers might get in on some of the gravy if a plant breeders' patent law were in place, but the cost of seeds to farmers would increase considerably. Of course that is another area which needs to be flagged but is not part of the Bill.

In closing, let me suggest that in the process of dealing with the Bill—and I understand that we will allow it to pass in this session—we as responsible parliamentarians should look at the kind of agricultural income security which makes it possible for seed growers, in fact for all producers in the agricultural industry, to survive. We should ensure that the viability of the family farm, or any kind of farm, is enhanced by the legislation which we pass. This piece of legislation does that to a small extent, but it does not deal with the real problems of the agricultural industry in Canada.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak on Bill C-64. This long-awaited legislation will amend the Seed Act in a very important way. The amendments are in recognition of the important changes which have occurred in the seed industry during the 26 years since the last major changes to the Act were implemented. This legislation has been a long time in the making, and I am pleased to say that it has very broad support.

● (1140)

Extensive consultations occurred with the provinces and with all major associations whose members could be affected prior to the Bill's introduction in this House.

It was unanimously passed at the committee stage following a complete and, I believe, a fruitful discussion regarding several important aspects.