

Plant Breeders' Rights

Granting plant breeders' rights will not necessarily bring a tremendous bonanza of new research to the country. Granting exclusivity for 18 years without granting provision for compulsory licensing, so that others could produce the seed, would be a real mistake. It will not ensure that research will take place. If research would necessarily take place, we would have had a regular bonanza of new farm chemicals developed in Canada, but we do not.

At the same time, all kinds of chemicals are coming in from other countries, chemicals on which we pay the full patent protection.

One farm chemical which came off patent after 18 years of exclusivity had previously been selling for something like \$25 a pint and its price has gone down to something like \$6 to \$10 a pint. There is an incentive for research to be done, but it will not necessarily happen.

A report brought out by the Government of Canada in 1984 shows a continual purchasing of small Canadian seed companies by large multinational seed companies or chemical companies and, in many cases, drug companies. There has been a corporate concentration, and I would like to talk about that a bit later on in my remarks.

My second concern is not directly about the Bill itself but relates to the Government's overall policy on public research. The general direction of the Government has been to cut back on public research, and we are opposed to that. The actual research that has been done in Canada is disproportionately Government research, but at the same time, Canada is a relatively small country in terms of population and economic power compared to the size of Canada's agricultural industry. I am speaking particularly of the western agricultural industry and our tremendous proportion of exports.

I, for one, would not want to entrust to the private sector the research which is necessary. I think about research into wheat rust and the like. There are whole laboratories dedicated to developing resistant varieties of seeds that may not be used for 10 or 15 years. Dedicated federal Government research establishments are working toward the future, picking up germplasm from all over the world to be incorporated into seeds in order to protect our vital western agricultural industry.

• (1150)

I am not opposed to more government research or to private research. I think it is desirable. This Bill has some benefits in that regard, but I think it is vital that we protect the public research which is done in the country. There should be more guarantees of that than was contained in the casual comments of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Mazankowski) this morning. His exact words were not particularly encouraging. In the recent Budget, \$500 million worth of government programs for agriculture were cut out over two years. I did not hear last November that the Government was planning to cut out everything from crop insurance, to transportation subsidies, to support for the dairy industry and so on.

When this Bill gets to committee, we will certainly want to have a much more determined commitment by the Government that the government research programs will be maintained. I do not believe that a private research company, especially a multinational which is totally dedicated to the bottom line in their across-the-world activities, is going to dedicate and commit the time, research, talent and money—let us not forget that—to ensure that we have the special disease resistant seeds we need that have to be prepared over a 10-year or 15-year horizon. Their responsibility is to their shareholders and to the bottom line. It is not to ensuring the vitality, the vigour and the preservation of Canadian agriculture. We certainly are very concerned with that side of the question in the plant breeders' rights legislation which we have before us today in the House of Commons.

Likewise, we have seen the Government cut back up to \$60 million in the last several years in government research programs. The Minister has said that for any seeds that Agriculture Canada develops and has a royalty on, 60 per cent would be plowed back to government research. To me, that is an admission that the Government is not very committed to this whole scene. It seems to me that 100 per cent of the royalties collected should be plowed back and that they should be incremental to whatever the government laboratories are receiving from the Government of Canada for its research. He did not clarify whether that 60 per cent would be plowed back and the full level of research maintained, and that the 60 per cent of royalties received would be incremen-