

Plant Breeders' Rights

sectors may have an impact upon the industry, but this is not anticipated to be a direct result of plant breeders' rights legislation. There have also been suggestions that the chemical companies associated with those multinationals would try to breed varieties which are dependent upon specific pesticides and fertilizers.

Before I was elected to Parliament, I was the chairman of a marketing board in the Province of Ontario marketing white beans. In 1977 there were extreme weather difficulties in the same manner as we had a drought last year. In 1977, particularly in Ontario, there was a strain of enthracnals that was new and came into our white beans along with the wet weather. Our plant breeders responded very rapidly. We said that we were going to use chemicals to control the disease. However, within three years, our plant breeders worked together and chemicals were used for a very short time until a variety was bred with resistance to that strain of Delta enthracnals.

I know that we have dedicated public breeding programs in this country. I want to acknowledge the fine work that they do, and the effort that is being made to breed varieties with resistance to the many diseases that are there to rust and smut.

Mr. Milliken: How is this Bill going to help?

Mr. Cardiff: This Bill will help do all those things, because it will allow the plant breeder to recoup and put more dollars back into the development of the breeding resources, and resistance is as important as new varieties. Many times, it means taking present varieties and assuring their continued viability by breeding in resistance to the various sectors.

I do not know if the Hon. Member lives on a farm or is familiar with the growing of beans, barley, corn, or any of those products. I invite the Member to come to my farm and look at the crops that we grow. I would be very happy to have the Member come to western Ontario some time and look at some great crops in that area.

Mr. Milliken: I would be delighted to do so, and I will make a speech when I am there.

Mr. Cardiff: I invite the Hon. Member to come when we are baling hay.

Mr. Nunziata: Is that where you learned to shovel it?

An Hon. Member: You fork it, you don't shovel it. We have to teach these guys everything.

Mr. Cardiff: It has been suggested that those provisions are not enough, that multinationals will take over. I do not agree with that. The ongoing global process of mergers and diversification in all sectors may have an impact on the industry, but this is not anticipated to be a direct result of plant breeders' rights legislation. I want to reinforce that point, as much as I can.

The task of plant breeding is so complicated that it is highly unlikely a plant could be bred for a specific chemical. That is not what the interests of our plant breeding programs are, and have not been, and will not be.

In the event that this did occur, the variety would still require registration under the Seeds Act to verify its merits and suitability before it could be sold. There is a process of licensing before that could ever happen. There would also be competition in the market-place from other private breeders and public-sector programs that would be producing varieties without such limitations.

Ultimately, the decisions must rest with farmers. Those decisions should stay with the farmers, because they provide the bread-basket of this great nation of ours. Many of them came as immigrants, and perhaps for some people it may be a long time ago, but when one looks at world history, the farmers are pioneers. Many were our grandfathers or our great-grandfathers. I believe that the farmers have responded to the needs of this country, helped it grow, and will continue to make it grow if we give them the room to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cardiff: Farmers will not buy a product which requires high input unless the benefits are sufficient to support the initial investment. Farmers are good shoppers and good buyers. They have always had choices and they will continue to have choices, because the farmers will demand that that choice be there. I have lived on a farm all of my life, worked with farmers, and I know how they feel.