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Chair

Mr. Paul Steckle

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)): I'll call the meeting to order.

We have before us a group of witnesses appearing on a theme that we've been working with for a number of weeks, though it seems much longer than that: the matter of Bill C-27.

I want to welcome our guests. We have with us Dr. Shiv Chopra, Dr. Margaret Haydon, and Dr. Gérard Lambert. These people are former employees of Health Canada. I would also like to welcome to the committee Dr. Lester Friedlander, veterinarian, and former employee of the United States Department of Agriculture.

As I mentioned a moment ago, we're here to look at the whole issue of C-27. I would ask our witnesses today, and those who are questioning our witnesses, to try to remain on the theme of C-27. I realize that we could go in all sorts of directions, but the focus today should be on C-27.

It is also my duty to maintain order during these proceedings. We will conduct this meeting in a way that is appropriate and respectful of one another, regardless of what our viewpoints may be.

With that, I would call the witnesses to bring their testimony to the table. I am sure that all of us have waited for this moment for a long time. I have Dr. Chopra first, then Dr. Haydon, Dr. Lambert, and Dr. Friedlander.

Mr. Shiv Chopra (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. Because we were fired together, we three have become a package. My colleagues have elected me to make the opening comments, but all three of us will be available for questions. I will proceed, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, to make an opening statement. I won't take the 30 minutes.

The Chair: Proceed.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Basically, sir, Bill C-27 refers to the CFIA, but with your kind permission I would at least ask your forgiveness to say, if I can have that liberty, that this bill is connected to Bill C-28, because yesterday we appeared before the health committee.

In Bill C-28, which is at second reading, Health Canada and CFIA have been working together up to now. Health Canada, under Bill C-28, will give up its responsibility to pre-market assess pesticides and veterinary drugs. They will issue conditional or temporary approvals, with the idea that if something goes wrong or they feel something is wrong, then they can withdraw them at any time. We

feel this was a wrong suggestion to have made, so Bill C-28 should be rejected, together with it.

Now I'll come to Bill C-27.

Concerning CFIA's responsibility, CFIA was created in 1996 with a dual role. One was to continue the inspection role the Department of Agriculture used to do on behalf of Health Canada, which sets the standard of human safety for all pesticides and veterinary drugs that are used in food production and crops, as well as in meat and milk. The inspection role for the CFIA was expanded to also include, as a promoter or as an agency for trade on behalf of Canada, projecting to foreign governments and so on that Canadian food is safe.

Now, in the proposal with Bill C-27, they're saying six—or maybe eight or nine or ten—different acts of Parliament, many of which are attached to the Criminal Code of Canada, will be under the sole guardianship of the CFIA. CFIA will now, as a result, if this bill is passed, become the producer, the petitioner, the promoter, the assessor, the regulator, the inspector, the prosecutor, the arbiter, and wheeler-dealer of all the bad things that have been happening during the last 30 or 40 or 50 years to Canadian food production for crops and animals. That in fact from now on will continue to happen, legitimized, and it will get much worse, and any damage as a result will be paid for by the Canadian public.

One of the things I must mention is that up to now CFIA and Health Canada have been regulating all food residues, because the whole concern up to now, since 1967, has been about what residues of pesticides or veterinary drugs are left in the food and should be removed.

We feel that was wrong then and is going to get much worse. The residues are not the problem, either from pesticides or from the veterinary drugs. The issue here is one of causing cancer or reproductive disorders, for which there is no limit you can determine by maximum residue limits, which are published in the Canada Gazette. If something can cause cancer, a single molecule of a product can attach to a single cell in the body and cause cancer. The same thing applies to immature, prepubescent children for reproductive disorders.

Then we come to antibiotics. If there are residues in your food supply, the only concern there is that the residue may cause an allergic reaction in some person who may be sensitive to that particular antibiotic. But that's not the issue. The issue there is when the antibiotics are given to animals, as they are—50% of antibiotic use is actually in agriculture. GMOs are now included in there as well, because there are antibiotic markers in them.

As a result of all the changes that have happened because of new technologies in food production, there has been an increase in cancer—that's proven—and an increase in reproductive disorders, immune disorders, and various kinds of things as a result of the use of these.

• (1535)

Now, what the antibiotics do in animals is produce antibiotic resistance in bacteria, some of which may not harm the animal. But they become resistant. They are pathogens for people, and then they become killers of people, and then there are six, seven, eight, or not any antibiotics left to treat people with.

You are dealing with organisms like MRSA or Clostridium difficile going into hospitals and killing people. As a result of these kinds of effects, the European Union, for many years now, has banned the use of antibiotics and hormones in food production. As a result, they have benefited. They've also demonstrated that there's been no harmful effect in terms of the quality or quantity of food production. We in Canada, with Bill C-28 and Bill C-27, are going in the opposite direction.

We are just scientists. We are not against harmonization. We are not against trade. We are not against profit. We're simply doing our jobs. This is what we have been trying to say inside Health Canada. As a result of speaking out inside, we've been told, in writing—we have much correspondence—to not speak about this, to not speak about mad cow disease.

We predicted it could happen back in 1997. We wrote to the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Chrétien, in 1997. When it did happen, we wrote to the ADM, Diane Gorman, that this is how to stop it. Then we wrote to the Minister of Health, Anne McLellan, saying here's how to stop it. Instead of listening to us, we were first suspended. There were four of us. One of us has died, and all three of the rest of us were on stress leave. This is the effect.

What we're saying is that both these bills must be rejected. We're not simply saying to reject them. We're simply saying that you are parliamentarians, you are legislators; allow discussion to occur with the public and the scientific community, not in a controlled way, as has been happening.

We're saying that the pressure on us to pass these things has been coming from Privy Council. And that's it. That's a very strong statement to make and we have information to back it up. And we were told no. The Supreme Court has been on our side.

There we are, sir, and that's where I'll stop talking for further questions.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Dr. Chopra.

Now we move to Dr. Friedlander for your presentation.

Mr. Lester Friedlander (As an Individual): Thank you very much for having me.

I am honoured to be invited to comment on Bill C-27, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Enforcement Act. This is a step in the right direction to combat the issue we are facing in today's

world: the emergence of animal disease in different species that we would never have thought would cross the species barrier.

Every time an animal disease emerges that we thought would stay within that species, it has infected mankind. Some of the latest animal diseases that have crossed the species barrier are bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, or mad cow disease, and in humans, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or vCJD; coronavirus, found in animals but which has spread to humans; severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS; avian influenza, a type A influenza virus found in avians, especially ducks, and strain H5N1, which affects humans. These are some of the most recent animal diseases that have been found in humans.

In any food inspection plan there are key issues that have to be addressed. One of the foremost is protecting the Canadian consumer. The meat and poultry products have to be from healthy animals, have nutritional value, benefit the consumer, and be wholesome. One thing I've learned from my experience is that when a veterinarian makes a determination that food be passed for human consumption, he has to ask himself this question: by passing this for human consumption, does it meet the consumer's expectations? When you look at the food you are going to consume, do you visualize the animal being clean, fed a healthy diet in good conditions, and disease free, and did the animal not feel any pain or suffering during the process of being made for human consumption?

Since agribusiness, ranching, feeding, slaughtering, processing, and rendering are multi-billion-dollar industries, there seem to be too many conflicts of interest when it comes to protecting the consumer. I firmly believe that the meat, poultry, and fish inspection-related industries should be under a separate consumer agency, administered by veterinarians and medical doctors, with master's or PhDs in public health, since the primary concern is to protect the consumer at all costs. These would be the best people to administer this new consumer agency.

When a veterinarian like me says a carcass has to be condemned, I do not need a senator or congressman calling my supervisors in Washington, D.C., and telling them to tell me to save as much of the carcass as possible. In other words, if I say the carcass and its parts are condemned, there is no more discussion about it. I do not have to hear, "Save a hind quarter or front shank".

I know my time is limited, and to be fair to the other speakers, I will close. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of your committee. There are more subjects I can talk about, but I know my time is limited.

I would like to finish and also tell the committee that federal whistle-blowing is a very important protection to have. With this type of employee protection, we are guaranteed to be heard without any harassment, retaliation, and undue reprimands.

Downer cows should never be used for human consumption in any way, shape, or form. Ruminant-to-ruminant feeding regulations have to be strictly enforced, and no specific risk materials should be fed to any species.

Thank you for having me.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Friedlander.

We'll move into our question period, and we'll begin with Mr. Ritz for seven minutes. We'll proceed in that order, with seven minutes in the first round, five in the second, and we'll try to stay very close to our timelines.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Friedlander, you're on a bit of a buzz tour through Canada, speaking and so on. Who's funding that?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Certain consumer agencies.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Can you list them?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: There is Voice for Animals, TRACS, Friends of the Environment Foundation—several along those lines.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Are these consumer groups or are they scientific groups?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: These are mostly consumer groups.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Are there any government agencies sponsoring you?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, sir.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Okay.

In your first paragraph you talk about BSE, SARS, avian flu, and then you say that these are all coming from “modern industrial farming techniques” exacerbating the problem.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, they are.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I'm wondering, because none of those diseases actually started on a so-called modern industrial factory-farm type of situation.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, they did start in those types of situations. When you have concentrated feeding operations and there are chances of disease spreading, it goes through like wildfire, and then it's very hard to contain.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I look at our modern systems here in Canada. I can't speak to the States; I'm not that familiar with the States, although I've been through some down there. They have veterinarians on staff. They have highly educated, highly motivated people on staff who do this on a 24/7 basis. I'm wondering how that is more problematic than a backyard operation.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I can speak to what is in the United States. You have people there who you might say are knowledgeable or educated, but when you deal with these factory farms or concentrated animal feeding operations, everything is now push-button. There really isn't too much involvement with humankind when it comes to that operation.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I guess we could argue that one all day.

You've been out of the industry for about 10 years now?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, sir.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Things have changed. We've seen dramatic changes in Canada, especially, in the way we run these operations, the oversight that's required, and so on. So is your data still current or is it 10 years out of date?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, it's still current because I keep up to date with everything that's going on.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: All right.

I'd like to get your definition of a downer cow.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: A downer cow is a non-ambulatory animal, not walking, that shows different signs of disease—ill health, malnutrition.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Years ago in my former life I had cows considered to be downer cow by that definition, but it was birthing a calf that damaged the cow. There was nothing wrong with it other than—

Mr. Lester Friedlander: That's true, too, but when it comes to a veterinary perspective, if I see a downer cow come in, I have no idea what caused that animal to go down. It could be because of calving. I have to determine right there that's a downed cow and then proceed with my procedures.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Most of your work was done in a cull-cow operation, under 30 months?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, it was. It was done in a cull-cow operation.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I know how busy my schedule is, and when you say you don't need a senator or a congressman calling up your superiors to say, save a hind quarter or a front quarter, I'm wondering how they would have the time to do that or why they'd even know that was going on.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: In my situation, when I had one of the highest condemnation rates in the United States—I was condemning between 20 and 25 cows a days—

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Out of how many, on a run?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: We were slaughtering about 1,800 a day.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Okay. So 25 out of 1,800 is a little over 1%.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes. In that situation it cost the packer a lot of money, and it adds up.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Yes, no doubt about it.

Dr. Chopra, one point you were talking about in your dissertation as something the public should be concerned about is genetically modified animals for food. I'd like a definition of that.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Genetically modified animals for food are animals that are used for immune globulin, drug production, and various things like that. They are also—

• (1550)

Mr. Gerry Ritz: But that's not food.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Well, they are animals that are modified to produce drugs for people or other materials that way.

Similarly, there are actual proposals for modifying animals to give more meat, or leaner meat, and various things of that nature. So that's a genetically modified animal for various purposes. The question is, can we use that for human food? Now we actually have to define what the ill effects would be.

If you want me to continue, I can continue.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Sure.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Scientists can actually produce any kind of protein you want by fermentation in flasks. You can literally grow fish from the trees if you want. Technology can do those kinds of things.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: They'd be easier to catch.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Well, it would be easier.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I'm going back to Dr. Friedlander. I know you're quite concerned about the Americans hiding BSE. I've seen some of your speech materials, and you're quite concerned, especially when you talk about a Texas cow and so on; we've all heard those urban myth rumours.

I look at other countries around the world. While the U.S. has 9% of the total cow herd globally, India has 30%, Brazil 15%, and China 12%. Those top three countries have never had a reported case of BSE either. I'm wondering, are they hiding them?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Well, my saying is "if you do not test, you do not find". Now, I don't know the situation of those countries, if they're adequately testing or moving in that situation. I only can talk about what's going on in the United States.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: And you're convinced they're hiding examples.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I'm 99.9% convinced that mad cow disease is among the herd in the United States.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Is there any documentation, anything you can point to that would verify that?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: There was one situation I was directly involved with where the head pathologist had a meeting in Washington, D.C., and they asked this head pathologist, Dr. McCaskey, if anybody in the United States would ever find mad cow disease. Dr. McCaskey said it would be one veterinarian; they asked who that would be, and he said Dr. Lester Friedlander in Pennsylvania. They asked Dr. McCaskey why he would say Dr. Friedlander—

The Chair: Your time has expired, I'm sorry. You may finish, but we have to move on.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Was that on the record, that statement that you would be the guy who found BSE?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes—well, I didn't find BSE.

The Chair: Let's leave it at that for the moment, and we may come back on the second round.

We'll go to Madam Rivard, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Lester Friedlander.

We were talking about antibiotics earlier. If we're talking about hind quarters, you don't need to be told which parts of the hind quarters are good or not. Let's say I'm a farmer and I have goats. One of my goats gives birth. I give her antibiotics because it has a problem, and I decide to send it the slaughterhouse. How can you reassure people who eat that meat? How long do you have to wait for the antibiotics to be eliminated? Is there a way of knowing whether the animal taken to the slaughterhouse still has antibiotic residues?

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: In the United States the Food and Drug Administration is the one that takes care of all antibiotics for vaccines. On all antibiotics it's labelled what the withdrawal time is for certain types of food animals before you can send that animal to slaughter.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Yes, I understand that very well. But what happens if the producer hasn't read the labels and administers the antibiotic?

Is there any way of knowing at the slaughterhouse if the animal's meat contains antibiotic residues?

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, to a veterinarian like me, who sees the animal come in, there are some indications of antibiotic abuse. It could be injection sites that, after the hide comes off, tell us the animal was injected with antibiotics, and they sometimes do random testing for antibiotics on these animals.

•(1555)

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Can you tell that from the animal's liver? Does that require very specific tests?

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: They run specific tests on the liver and also the kidneys, and they also usually take a pound of muscle to run tests on these animals.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Mr. Chopra, you talked a lot about residual traces that cause cancer. I'd like you to give us more details on that. You also talked about antibiotics.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I was speaking about two issues here. They are materials that cause cancer, and those could be pesticides or they could be hormones. There is no test to determine the residue level that will not cause cancer; therefore, there's no way to know. The only way to stop that is not to use those kinds of materials in food production at all.

That's one.

When you come to antibiotics, the issue is not the residue left in the meat, because even if there's some residue of the antibiotic left in the meat, if you're not allergic to that antibiotic, nothing is going to happen to you. If you are a goat farmer, a cattle farmer, whatever, and you're using antibiotics excessively to make those animals grow bigger and faster or prevent disease—if there's no disease—then those antibiotics generate antibiotic-resistant bacteria inside the animal itself, inside the gut of the animal. Some of those bacteria now can cause disease in people.

Farmers may not become infected with it, because they're working with it every day and they become immune, but if a farmer goes to a hospital or into a community carrying that bug and they leave it behind in the hospital or in the community, those organisms, like *Clostridium difficile* or MRSA, start spreading and infecting people who are immune compromised, who have cancer, who are in hospital, who go for a simple operation of the appendix or prostate. They pick up the infection and die, because there's nothing left now to treat them with.

Those are the kinds of issues. Therefore, antibiotics must not be abused in that sense. That is the reason the Europeans have banned both the hormones and antibiotics. They've also shown that there is no adverse impact on the productivity of those animals.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Is it dangerous for humans to eat meat from animals that have received these antibiotics?

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No problem.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: That's not a problem.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Not because of the antibiotics. There is no danger to the general population from antibiotic residues. Some may be very toxic, so you'd have to prevent that. The only concern with the residue is that some people in the population may be allergic, and when they eat that meat or drink that milk they might get an allergic reaction or may even die. But that's rare.

But when antibiotic-resistant bacteria emerge, like *E. coli*, salmonella, campylobacter, and so on.... In the United States now, for example, 40,000 people suffer from those infections every year, and many die from those infections because there's nothing left to treat them. The WHO has been saying not to do this. In Canada we have approved and continue to approve these drugs. Some were approved after we were fired, and these are antibiotics that should never be approved.

One of them, called Batryl, is in litigation in the United States, because they approved it and then they wanted to take it off. The Bayer company and the USFDA are in court. They have been in court for five years, and the drug continues to be used.

Those are the kinds of damages that are occurring due to these intensive, big, mega-farm operations, because they cannot have factory farm operations unless they use these covers with antibiotics and so forth.

The Chair: Our time is very short.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: How do you view the fact that veterinarians will have to expand their field of inspection? For example, some veterinarians will inspect animals, while others will inspect cheese houses or processing plants. Do you think there's a danger in that?

• (1600)

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: There's a system in place right now, which is what Bill C-27 wants to replace. There is a system in place. Health Canada establishes the standard on what is expected from the sale of those products and the use of those products. The CFIA's job is to pursue and effect.

For example, you say this is the speed limit on the highway, and now you're sending a police inspector to catch people who are speeding. Otherwise, it's no good passing legislation if you don't pursue it by prosecuting people.

The CFIA's job is to prosecute, not to promote bad things, which is what the CFIA has been doing and would like to do. These acts are attached to the Criminal Code because of the actions that will occur. People can be prosecuted, put in jail, and the CFIA will now become the sole policeman in charge of everything—inspecting farms, impounding, whatever is described in the bill.

That is precisely what it is.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move now to Mr. Easter, for seven minutes.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome, witnesses.

Listening to the responses, to the discussion thus far, is your concern—to the group of three, and Dr. Friedlander, separately—really about this bill, Bill C-27, or more so against modern farming practices?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: The two go together, because if you are not already practising what should have been practised 30 or 40 years ago....

In fact, the veterinary drugs and pesticides are already in temporary approval.

The issue of antibiotic resistance has been in Health Canada since 1969. The Europeans have followed through, and therefore they have banned those. So modern management of factory farm operations has been considered to be a bad thing to do.

Denmark, for example, has taken the lead on that, and they have demonstrated how to operate farms, even mega-farms.

Now you're saying, in the second half of your question, if you're going to make a bad situation worse, then the consequences will be worse.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Have you read the legislation?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Yes, absolutely.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Dr. Friedlander?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, I have.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I just don't see how you're getting to your comments via the legislation.

I heard what you said in the beginning. You went along the line that all this would be under one act—producer, arbitrator, and so on. I cannot for the life of me understand how you can come to that conclusion when we're combining a number of acts that already give CFIA the authority under those various acts. I can't see how you can come to that conclusion in terms of this particular piece of legislation, which is more about modernization and giving CFIA the tools to do their job better.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I disagree with you, Mr. Easter, because if that were the case—and you remember that you were partly responsible for the BGH story. If this bill were in place at that time, then BGH would have been passed in Canada.

We three were parliamentary witnesses, and that's how it was stopped in Canada. Following that, Europe followed the Canadian line and banned it for the very same reasons. Therefore, you should be proud of yourself and us for having stopped that.

Now you want to go to the other side and say we're giving all that responsibility to the CFIA. The CFIA is only inspectors. At the same time, as I said in the introductory remarks, Health Canada wants to approve things quickly to make Canada more competitive with bad food?

Hon. Wayne Easter: This is where we disagree. I agree with what we did, and I think we did the right thing in terms of the hormone to dairy cattle. I believe we did the right thing in that instance.

In my reading of this bill, I don't see why we still can't do that under this particular bill. I see the bill entirely differently from the way you do. I think the protection we were able to get previously is still available to us, and what we're really doing here is giving the CFIA better ability to do their job in terms of the protection of food and health safety.

•(1605)

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I heard your comments yesterday on CBC. There we are. The CFIA now and the Government of Canada have been sued for \$7 billion. You're saying we were protecting, and CFIA is in fact now being charged for not protecting—and Health Canada included, sir.

Hon. Wayne Easter: That's an entirely different issue, and we haven't even had time to read that—

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Well, it's part of it.

Hon. Wayne Easter: —so I think you're taking that a little out of context.

I take from comments raised that one of your concerns is the foreign inspection arrangements, the pre-clearance in-transit programs that would come about as a result of this legislation.

Dr. Friedlander, in the United States there is talk of a safe food act of 2005, I believe. I forget which senator was putting it forward. Just from reading some of the news coverage on that particular bill, I would see the U.S. is moving closer to the way we do things here.

So my question really is in terms of these pre-arrangements we may make with other countries. Those arrangements would be on the basis that they would have to meet Canadian conditions. We're not going to the United States and accepting your inspection services for Canadian food coming into Canada. This act allows us to get into arrangements to ensure the product coming out of slaughter plant A, B, C, or D meets our standards, and veterinarians on the U.S. side are there to ensure that inspection. What do you see is the problem with that? Is that one of your concerns?

The propaganda out there is we're lowering our standards. We're not, or I don't see we are, but I'm willing to hear what you have to say on it.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Basically, I don't think we're trying to lower our standards. We're just trying to make sure the consumer is protected at all cost. There seem to be too many conflicts of interest going on between certain agencies, and also the inspection services going on in the United States.

Hon. Wayne Easter: The other three—do you have any comments you want to make in terms of the arrangements with other countries? What are your concerns there?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: The concern is that in the bill you're saying CFIA would be able to make arrangements or memos of understanding, which in my terminology would be wheeling and dealing to promote Canadian food, and Health Canada would be giving up and giving quick approvals to make Canada expediently give up its own regulations.

So I cannot agree with you that Canada will do what it's supposed to do. Canada has already...through Bill C-28, we are giving up that part already. We're now going to give up whatever little we were doing and make CFIA become everything, including wheeling and dealing and selling and promoting and inspecting and impounding and putting everybody...going into farms. This is stated in the bill. They can do what they want. Any time of the day they can go into farms and prosecute people and do whatever they want. Is that a bill? Is that the democratic Canadian legal system? Is that what you think this bill is going to do?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Just on that point, Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: We have to cut it off there; we'll get you on the next round.

Mr. Angus, we're moving to you now.

I'm sorry, but we have to stick to our rules.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank you all for coming today. I feel at the beginning I should probably make an explanation so it's on the record, because my colleague was asking all kinds of questions, Dr. Friedlander, about your reason for coming and who's paying you. My understanding is you are in Canada because we asked you, from this committee, to come here and speak of your experience. Is that not correct?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm very pleased you are here to share your experience, because Canadian cattle producers who speak to me after two solid years of this crisis want Canadian cattle to meet the best standards in the world. They believe we can meet the best standards in the world. I'm sure a lot of the U.S. cattle producers have the same desire.

The question here with Bill C-27 is the wisdom of placing trade and health safety under one vastly expanded organization. From your experience in the U.S. with cattle producers and the trade interests of agribusiness and the rendering industry, is consumer safety the first priority?

• (1610)

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, it isn't. It is not.

I can give you very good examples. When the ruminant-to-ruminant feeding came out just here in Canada and the United States, your government and my government said all specific risk materials can go to hog feed and poultry feed.

But they didn't go to the next step to tell the consumer that, number one, nothing kills prions; number two, these species are harbouring those prions. The third thing is that when these species die, they're allowed to be reprocessed and fed right back to cattle.

When you talk about mad cow disease, then, what you have is a ruminant-to-ruminant feeding program just going around in one big circle.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Are you saying that in the United States and Canada a hog on this feed that dies is then fed to cattle?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes. When the Food and Drug Administration first put ruminant-to-ruminant feeding into perspective, they allowed hogs and poultry that got these specific risk materials to be fed right back to cattle.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Many Canadian farmers that I've been speaking to say that given the devastation we've had from BSE, we need to go to the European standard. I know Mr. Easter says it's propaganda, but a number of organizations are telling me that C-27 is going to lock us into the U.S. model, which is solidly against any permanent, total animal protein ban. Should we move to the European standard to preserve human safety?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, I believe we should move to the European standard, to protect the consumer.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Dr. Chopra, I want to speak to you about the expanded powers of C-27. I understand that in 1997 you and your colleagues raised the issue that we might face an outbreak of BSE in Canada, and nothing was done. Is that correct?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: That's correct. In 1997, we were concerned about the use of hormones and antibiotics in our food supply. We

were concerned particularly about the bovine growth hormone coming into Canada. For a number of years, we were saying in the department that we should do something about it.

Because we were not being listened to, we wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien through our union to say that mad cow disease, even, could occur in Canada. This was in 1997.

When the disease did occur, we wrote to Diane Gorman, an assistant deputy minister, to suggest that we go to the European standard to control it. About 10 days later we wrote to the Minister of Health, which as civil servants we're not supposed to do. We stuck our necks out. We told our minister that we were not receiving any response from the department and that we should stop feeding animals to animals in order to protect our people and our beef production.

We all got suspended. Then we were reprimanded. Shortly thereafter we were fired.

Mr. Charlie Angus: So you raised concerns about the possibility of BSE and you were ignored. When we had an outbreak, you came forward with suggestions on how to deal with it. As a result, you were reprimanded, you were told to keep quiet, and then you were let go.

Given all this, what kind of faith should the consumer or the cattle producer in Canada put in the CFIA's ability to look after human health in this country?

• (1615)

The Chair: We're deviating from C-27.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'll rephrase the question. Given the expanded powers that C-27 will give the CFIA, what kind of trust should the Canadian public put in the CFIA?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: The CFIA was in charge when mad cow disease occurred. They did not consult Health Canada. You have not heard a single word from Health Canada, which is supposed to set the standard. Anything that goes into animal feed has to conform to a Health Canada standard, because of the possible effect on human health. But that was never done. CFIA spoke to us over the telephone and proposed a way of controlling the problem that we disagreed with.

We have correspondence within the department saying not to share this information with anybody—not with the president of the union or even among employees. This can be demonstrated.

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. Anderson for five minutes.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Friedlander was good enough to reveal his funding sources. I'm just going to ask you other three, are you receiving funding from any special interest groups?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I'm glad you asked that question. I put my house up for sale because I've been fired. We are all without income, and now the Department of Justice is saying they don't have any lawyers to start the case.

We've been fired for a year. We told Justice that if they didn't have any lawyers, they could at least put us on salary, as has been done with Dr. Friedlander in the United States. Then they could take 10 years if they wanted to.

What are we supposed to do? We have no axe to grind. We're simple public servants, your servants. This is what we are supposed to do. The government is spending millions of dollars to fight us, yet they're saying they have no lawyers. If we are prosecuted for something, don't we have the right to have at least a bail hearing?

The Chair: Let's go back to Bill C-27, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: You didn't answer my question. Was that a no or a yes?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I just answered you: we have no other sources of income. We need your help.

Mr. David Anderson: Thank you.

The Chair: I don't find that question related to Bill C-27.

Mr. David Anderson: I do have a question related to Bill C-27.

Dr. Friedlander, in a recent CBC interview you made the comment that you've been commissioned by the federal government. Is that correct?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Commissioned?

Mr. David Anderson: Did you say that in a recent interview?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, I didn't. What do you mean by commissioned?

Mr. David Anderson: I don't know what I mean by commissioned. It's supposedly a quote of yours, where you said you had been commissioned by the federal government.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, I haven't.

Mr. David Anderson: Okay. Thank you.

I just want to point out that we've got different positions on this bill here today. Three of you oppose the bill, but you support the bill, Dr. Friedlander. You say it's heading in the right direction.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Well, it's headed in the right direction, except I feel it should be a consumer agency. There are too many conflicts of interest, so I do not support the bill.

Mr. David Anderson: In your own document you say, "This is a step in the right direction to combat the issues that we are facing in today's world".

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Right.

I feel it's a step in the right direction, but there are still kinks that have to be flattened out in going in that right direction.

Mr. David Anderson: We've talked a little bit about oversight as well, insisting that there needs to be some oversight over this whole act, but you think that a consumer body...? What kind of structure would that consumer body have, if you could put it in place?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: It would be administered, as I said, by medical doctors or veterinarians with masters' degrees in public

health or PhDs in public health, where the main concern is the consumer and public health. It would be a federal agency, but without any kind of conflict of interest.

Mr. David Anderson: You'd have Health Canada oversee it then, or who would be—

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I wouldn't say it would be Health Canada; I would say it would be a separate consumer agency.

Mr. David Anderson: Who would be paying for their salaries?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Taxpayers.

Mr. David Anderson: So you've got another government agency that's going to be overseeing this government agency. What's to stop it from being influenced in the same way?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I'm not saying—

Mr. David Anderson: I just want to finish this point.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I'm sorry.

Mr. David Anderson: You've talked about the people who are supporting you today—Voice for Animals, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, and Beyond Factory Farming, who sponsored a press conference, I understand. Those are not producer groups; I don't even call them consumer groups. They're special interests groups. What we've seen before with some of these supposed consumer-run groups is that they get under the control of special interest and make no sense; they do more damage than good in what they're doing.

• (1620)

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I feel they are, in a sense, consumer groups, even though you say they are special interest groups, because they represent the people out there, whether for environmental factors or for public health or for animal voices or for anything like that.

Mr. David Anderson: They represent the people way out there. I represent the people who are out there and the producers who, I believe, are doing a good job. I believe our food is safe. I believe the environment in my part of the world is actually a lot better than it has been in past years. I guess I'm getting a little tired of the fear-mongering I'm hearing today, and I think what I'm seeing is a typical small "I" liberal strategy of taking exaggerated examples and then trying to apply them and calling them average—and we don't have an average situation. In my part of the world, on the average, people are taking care of the environment and are doing a good job. Consumers do not need to be protected from my producers; my producers are people who are honestly trying to live out their lives and do a good job in that.

We have some problems in the system. I understand that, but I don't appreciate the fear-mongering stretching across and making it look like the whole system is corrupted, because it's not.

The Chair: You've taken your time. If there are no questions, we'll move on to Ms. Ur.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it was Mr. Chopra who stated that Health Canada proves things too quickly. I only wish it were so; I've not seen the same evidence for that statement. We've had some concerns, whether it's through PMRA or sometimes with CFIA.

That being said, you indicated in your presentation that CFIA, or government, mishandled BSE. What should we have done differently and when?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: We should have banned the feeding of animals to all animals. That's step one. If you had done that, then disease would have stopped immediately. Then the cattle that were here should have been tested more, and the problem would have disappeared in a matter of five or six years from Canada, and in fact the borders of the whole world would have opened to Canadian beef immediately.

If you do that today, that will be the effect. We're waiting for the United States to tell us whether to do it or not. That is what would have happened if Health Canada and CFIA had followed our advice. And it is not just our advice. This is the European experience; learn from other people's mistakes and don't repeat them.

That's what would have happened. If you make that decision today not to feed animals to other animals, then the disease stops right there. Then you test more, and Japan, Europe, and everybody will open up—provided you also now say we're going to eliminate the use of hormones and antibiotics as well, if you want to export to Europe.

We don't need America to tell us what we should be doing. If we are independent, then we should be making independent decisions. You don't have to take my word for it. You're parliamentarians. You don't make up your own view and say "My producers are doing this". Call other scientific communities, or bring people from Europe. You have research farms. Bring other people. Let the scientific community talk in front of you in simple language—in plain language and in not very difficult terms, so that you will understand and the public will understand. All interest groups will be on your side. Canada will be a free country.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Where did BSE first originate?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: BSE originates from a single cow—

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: No, I understand that part, but where was it first discovered?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: In England.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Okay. So that's where we go back for information, is it?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, now you'll go.... England got it first, and then France, and others banned British beef. Just as Americans are denying that they have BSE—and they do—and they kept on doing that.... Then ultimately they found everybody who was using that practice had mad cow disease, whether it was in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, or wherever, and ultimately even in Japan. That's how it happens. The place where it didn't happen, and I'll go back to the

earlier question, was India, for example. How are you going to get BSE occurring there? They don't feed cows to cows. They don't eat cows themselves. So it's not going to happen.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: No, that's pretty easy there.

Keeping my questioning to you, sir, could rBST have been passed in the current bill had it been in place in the 1990s?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Yes, because under Bill C-28 that's what would have happened. If you gave a temporary notice of compliance, which is exactly what the companies were looking for and exactly what the United States gave in 1993, for two years, and then Europe put a two-year moratorium on it....

And Mr. Easter helped to say in Canada that we won't put a moratorium on, but we won't bash it for the time being. It was these three scientists who brought out the information about what was happening, the information that was hidden inside Health Canada and the USFDA. We had it under our noses, and that's the kind of corruption we're talking about.

I've used the word "corruption". This is what's happening: our system of regulating has been corrupted for a long time and is heading toward much worse.

● (1625)

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: I'll question Dr. Friedlander. You have been a veterinarian in the United States. I've had some return back to my riding who have practised in the United States, and they indeed have told me the same thing you have indicated here this morning, that while they were practising in the United States they too saw BSE, but they call it something different. Is that true, that it's under a different name?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Mad cow disease?

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Yes—well, BSE.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I don't know what different name they would call it by.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: That's what they indicated when they met with me, that there is BSE, but they call it something a little bit different, so it's not—

Mr. Lester Friedlander: It's a CNS disease, a central nervous system disease—

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Okay.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: —but I don't know what other disease they would call it.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur: Right.

Am I done?

The Chair: Yes, you're finished. You took five minutes.

I should point out to our questioners that we have two other guests here today, and I'm sure they would like....

If you feel at any time you would like to jump in, you're free to do that. We're not excluding you, but you have been, to this moment, very silent.

Ms. Margaret Haydon (As an Individual): I will comment on some of the corruption that I experienced at Health Canada, in the case of the bovine growth hormone. I was the main evaluator originally for a number of companies. One company came in and offered \$1 million to \$2 million to the management that was sitting in the same meeting I was attending. Then, a few years later, I was harangued and harassed by a senior manager to give the BST a conditional notice of compliance. This is exactly what we're talking about: speeding drugs through that are not safe, about which we know there are many unanswered questions.

Later on, of course, I had documents stolen from a cabinet.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We need to move on to the other side, and we'll move to Monsieur Gaudet for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to put my question to Mr. Lambert. What's good about Bill C-27, if there is anything good?

Dr. Gérard Lambert (As an Individual): That's hard to say.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I'll ask my question differently. How would you improve Bill C-27? If it's not good, it should be possible to improve it. In Quebec, feeding animal meal to animals has been prohibited since 1998.

Do you have any ideas for Bill C-27?

Dr. Gérard Lambert: In fact, in the case of mad cow disease, even if people want to test all the animals, they can't do it. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency doesn't approve this method because it isn't approved in the United States. Since it's an integrated system, they can't or don't want to do it. It's hard for the producer, and he loses as a result. Even if he wants his animals to be tested and is prepared to pay, he can't do it because Canada has a system that's integrated with that of the United States. The Japanese have asked that it be done so that we can export our beef to their country. Canadians and Americans don't want to do it. So the border's closed. We can't export. The producer is penalized.

• (1630)

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Would traceability be a good method? The animal would be monitored from birth to death.

Dr. Gérard Lambert: Yes, but it must be tested so that we can know whether it has the disease or not. We can trace the animal, but you have to test it.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: I'm going to ask you another question. I don't know much about these diseases. Can you test an animal while it's alive only or only when it's dead?

Dr. Gérard Lambert: Only when the animal is dead.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: My other question is for Mr. Friedlander. You said earlier that there were a number of cases in the United States and that we didn't know that. Is that the case in Canada? Are there more than three cases?

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Would you please repeat that?

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: You said earlier that there were a number of cases of BSE, mad cow disease, in the United States. Are there more than three cases in Canada? Currently we only know of three cases.

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: From my experience, I would say there are probably more cases of BSE in Canada than the three you have right now, based on the fact that the common denominator with mad cow disease is actually the feed.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: As I told you earlier, that meat has to be destroyed, as we've done in Canada. How can Bill C-27 be made better for all our farmers?

From what I can see, there's a struggle going on between the CFIA and you. Am I mistaken?

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: This is not a fight between the CFIA and us. The fight is for public safety and how we protect public safety. The issue is not legislation; the issue is not implementation or about what's happening. The issue is what the scientific opinion is. The only people who can talk about that are the scientists, and you must get those scientists before you and not make your own opinions without that being openly discussed.

Don't take my word for it. Don't take our word for it. We're saying you have the money. We are a country. Call an international meeting, if you want, in Canada on Canadian soil inside Parliament. Bring people from Europe. Bring other people, experts who have had this experience in all those matters concerning food safety and trade, and then we'll all be happier.

We're not against anybody. We're not against trade, and we're not against the CFIA or anything. We're simply saying this is a human necessity in modern times.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

We'll move to Mr. Drouin.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Chopra, you referred to corruption. That's a serious charge. Would having an independent agency eliminate the danger? Would that be better if another agency did the work instead of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency?

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, it will not. By making new organizations, you don't eliminate corruption. You have to go to the heart of the problem.

We already have Health Canada, which in theory is a very good system. That is the equivalent of the USFDA, and we also have the CFIA within the Department of Agriculture, which is the equivalent of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These two countries have been fundamentally integrated since the early 1900s, because they passed from the adulteration acts then to the first food and drugs acts in both countries around 1945, and then in 1967 there was a revision. Again, all those have been asserted.

Therefore, if we operate under the existing acts of Parliament, that is, the Food and Drugs Act of Canada, integrated with the food and drug act of the United States, and then have that implemented properly and not fool around with the management of it through the regulations, which is what happened.... The issue is causing cancers, and we'll only administer...through finding the residues of those products.

In fact, the residues do not determine safety. If you're causing cancer or if you're causing antimicrobial resistance residues, do nothing. It is and has been an expensive waste of money. If you keep on going in that direction...and in fact now through the new legislation they're talking about administrative maximum residue limits, which means they have not been able to determine what level will cause cancer, so they've decided to call it "administrative".

We have correspondence going back to 1998 between CFIA and Health Canada, saying Health Canada should give us guarantees these residues will not cause cancer; otherwise, they'll reject our food. Wherever they find any trace of hormones or antibiotics, they'll go to zero tolerance.

Health Canada said no, leave it alone; we don't have those residue limits given in table 3 of the Canada Gazette; therefore, wait for us for a little while longer. Now Health Canada is saying they're going to change the word to "administrative" residue limits.

If the maximum residue limits didn't work, why would you change them to administrative residue limits? These are all transitional, temporary arrangements Canada is moving toward to favour the companies that want to sell these products for mega-production on factory farms.

So corruption cannot be removed that way. It is a corrupt system that has crept into our modern agriculture, and we as Canadians, whether we are producers or consumers, all of us Canadians, must pay attention to that.

As scientists, we have no axe to grind. We're not sellers; we're not vendors; we're not any of those things. We are public servants who were given a small piece of the Food and Drugs Act to administer, the sale of veterinary drugs in Canada, and that's basically what we're talking about.

Corruption, we've said publicly, is a strong word. We're saying it's coming from the Privy Council, and you people get lobbied directly and indirectly, some sitting right here, who are saying their producers are doing well.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Mr. Chairman, if our producers don't have problems, they can't tell us the contrary. We're not defending

producers who aren't honest. The producers we work with are honest people who earn a living within their families. Sometimes they are second and third generation. Even if you've seen certain cases, you shouldn't generalize and say that everybody is similar.

You referred to market integration. Mr. Lambert, earlier you mentioned that we didn't want to study all cases so as not to harm the Americans. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me they're saying at the International Office of Epizootics that a country with fewer than 12 cases wouldn't become a target country. Couldn't that mean that testing all animals isn't warranted? Since we're integrated on both sides, what happens in Canada also affects the Americans. In 1997, we took measures with regard to animal meal to prevent this from reoccurring.

I find there are contradictions in what you're telling us.

Dr. Gérard Lambert: The important thing is to have access to markets. If we restrict markets with the Americans because we're following the same regulations, there are problems when it comes to opening markets. Some markets are closed to Canadian products because we don't follow their instructions, their way of doing things. They do a lot of tests in Europe. They test all animals in Japan. We can't relax their standards. As a result, if we don't meet...

• (1640)

[English]

The Chair: Your time has expired. We have to move to the next questioner.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I want to get back to the issue of Bill C-27. We're trying to balance here our ability to trade, our ability to maintain our standards, and our ability to ensure human safety. That is the fundamental question and why we're here today.

Dr. Friedlander, I'd like to ask you one question about one of the big concerns about this bill. A lot of people are concerned that we're going to be going down to U.S. standards, as opposed to the U.S. perhaps meeting our standards. Given your experience in the U.S. and the size of the U.S. agribusiness, what's the likelihood of the U.S. industry meeting Canadian standards, as opposed to expecting that Canada will simply adopt their standards?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: You're asking what is the likelihood that American producers are going to say that?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I'm not really too sure, to tell you the truth. There are sort of mixed feelings in the United States now, so it depends on who you talk to.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It seems to me there's more of an issue getting our products into the U.S. than getting the U.S. products into here. Is it likely, if we raise our standards to a full, complete animal protein ban, that American producers wanting to get into our markets would do the same?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: There is a very good possibility of that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Would that be a reason for them to want to share that standard?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I'd assume so.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The big question is also oversight—whether our CFIA standards are enough and whether USDA standards are enough. Questions have been raised about the efficacy of BSE testing in the U.S. I read an article that said after the BSE case was found in the U.S., testing dropped by 50% in that region in the following month. I don't know if that's true.

From your experience, do you believe there is enough testing?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: There isn't enough testing.

The official testing for BSE in the United States goes back to 1990. Out of 135 million to 140 million cattle we have officially in the United States, USDA tested only 2,500 cattle brains. In the following year, it was the same thing—they tested only 2,500. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that's just a waste of time and money, 2,500 out of a possible 135 million.

Most recently, the USDA is saying they're getting close to 500,000 cattle brains being tested. What I found through the Freedom of Information Act, and I did my research, is a lot of the testing was done with younger animals. When they did this testing, it was not done with high-risk animals such as downers or older dairy cows.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'd like to go back to your experience, because, as you said, you had a very small part of the Health Canada profile, and we will be looking at a very large mandate for CFIA. You seem to have raised serious issues about whether or not public interest was put first when it needed to be.

I'd like to ask you a personal question. You've lost your jobs, you're selling your house, you come out in public, and you're—

The Chair: Mr. Angus, let's stay on Bill C-27. We're not doing an investigation here on these witnesses today. Please, let's get back to Bill C-27.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay, I'll stay on Bill C-27.

Right now there's a \$7 billion lawsuit against CFIA and a number of other agencies. Given your experience in the past, do you believe CFIA has learned their lesson and would be able to handle the expanded powers given to them by Bill C-27 to further the public interest?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: CFIA has not learned their lesson. CFIA, back some years ago, put a ban on Brazilian beef on the suspicion they were not revealing some information on their feeding practices to their cattle. In Brazil, which is a big beef-producing country, they have not found any BSE to this day, because they graze their animals.

In Canada—during that same time, and since, and now—CFIA insists we just had a single cow. Politicians have been saying they will eat that and nothing will happen to them. They can demonstrate it to you, right in front of you; nothing is going to.... If you're already 40 or 50 years old, you're not going to get CJD, because the incubation period is up to 15 to 20 years in people, and in cows, five or six years.

If you follow those kinds of things, you've got to get the scientific community out there. Neither CFIA nor Health Canada has protected either the safety of people or the production and sale of Canadian beef. They've damaged both and they're continuing to damage both. If they had listened to us...and we're not inventing this opinion; we're only learned scientists who can interpret what we've learned from the European experience. We're asking you to just follow that, and we will be a great country.

• (1645)

The Chair: Okay. Time has expired again.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Friedlander, about half an hour ago you made the pretty bold statement that basically there are a bunch more BSE cases in Canada. I'd suggest you stick to stuff you can actually verify and stay away from fear-mongering. One thing we know—I'm a beef producer—is our beef consumption went up across this country; I think it's approaching 10%, and it could be higher than that.

There is one thing I do want to go back to. I know the New Democratic Party invited you here today. You answered the question about whether you were commissioned by the federal government. I'd just like to know if you are in any way contracted. Any of you can answer this.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, I'm not.

Mr. Larry Miller: In any way at all?

The Chair: We're getting back into investigative questioning. Let's please stick to Bill C-27.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay, then, Mr. Chairman, here is my next one.

The one thing I've noticed is the three witnesses we have here, former employees of the government, are basically saying Bill C-27 should be scrapped in its entirety. Now it isn't often you get a bill that's absolutely no good, even from this government. I guess there's got to be some good in it. There have got to be some good things in it, and I'd like to hear some examples from you.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: What I would like to suggest, sir, is we're not even asking you to scrap it. We're simply asking you to do your research with the scientific community; postpone it till after you've done your own research. But don't make your own statements, because what's your source of information? Your research is to go to the department, to the CFIA.

Mr. Larry Miller: Is there anything good in it?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No. Right now there's nothing good in it because you need to verify it before you put the bill into Parliament.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chopra.

These two people here, Mrs. Haydon and Mr. Lambert, do you speak for yourselves at all?

Ms. Margaret Haydon: I tend to agree with Dr. Chopra, and I think it's like making a silk purse out of a sow's ear right now.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Gérard Lambert: Bill C-27 should be set aside. Committees of inquiry should be formed among consumers or in the scientific community to discuss the matter. This bill entails an enormous number of changes. Is it really what Canadians want?

An investigation should be conducted to determine what Canadians want.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. I was having trouble following the interpreter, but that's probably my hearing.

I'm going to move on to another part. Were any of you three part of the consultations for Bill C-80 prior to 1999 before it died on the order paper? I understand you were still employees then.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: In that sense, you should consider yourself lucky that we've been fired, because we are able to talk to you. According to the MPs' code, Parliament's code, public servants cannot even talk to you. You cannot approach us, and there are directives. Democratically speaking, I think that's wrong, but you parliamentarians have agreed to that kind of behaviour, that public servants can only talk through their permitted—

• (1650)

Mr. Larry Miller: What was your involvement in the consultations on that bill? That was my question.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Yes, but whom, though?

Mr. Larry Miller: Pardon?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Who would consult with us? Could you consult with us? No, you couldn't. That's what my answer is.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Chopra, I wasn't at this table in 1999. I'm asking you what your involvement was.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I'm saying no MP could approach us to ask a question because we would have been fired then.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. One other thing.

Mr. Friedlander, have you ever visited a Canadian processing plant?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: No, sir, I have not.

Mr. Larry Miller: Then I guess it throws out the question of how you can actually be able to fairly compare a U.S. slaughter plant and a Canadian slaughter plant without actually having visited one.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: That's true too, but I'm just basing it on my experience that they operate on the same procedures and line speed and mechanics.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

We now move to Mr. Easter for five minutes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'm surprised to hear you say, Dr. Chopra, that there's nothing in this bill, when the bill gives the capability to respond more quickly than we have, when the bill deals with things such as tampering and so on and so forth, when the bill moves us into the electronic age in terms of moving information to protect public health and safety. I think those are good moves. To just wave your hands and say, "Don't deal with the bill", or "Throw it out", is I think missing the point.

To be completely honest with you, I'm still trying—and I went through the bill again, while we were talking—to determine your problems with the bill. Maybe it's me, but I just don't quite get how your concerns relate directly to Bill C-27. I can understand your concern, I think, with Bill C-28, which is a different bill from this one.

Our concern is how do we protect public safety. Is your concern really with this bill, or is your concern more with Bill C-28, which you claim gives—I believe you called it—administrative compliance limits? Therefore, Health Canada, from your perspective, may not be doing its job in setting standards.

But just to go one step further, Mr. Chair, I went through all the various acts that we're amending here, and we're not doing anything in the Food and Drugs Act. We're not touching it. We're not amending it from what we're doing now. So how do you—

Mr. Shiv Chopra: What you're doing is putting the cart before the horse. You're the agriculture committee; there's the health committee. The two bills should be one piece of legislation and the committees should be looking at it together. If you don't want to do that, then you should be sitting with the health committee or they should be sitting with you.

This is like at the world level, where you have the FAO and the WHO fighting. I see the same thing happening here. You have one parliamentary committee and another parliamentary committee, and you're saying there is this piece of legislation. The farmers want more pesticides and the drug companies want to sell more pesticides and drugs, and so on, and Health Canada doesn't want to administer it; they just want to give blanket early approvals. Then you say CFIA will hold these standards along with the factory farm operations, and you discard the regular farmers, the National Farmers Union.

I've been here. They made a presentation to you. They condemned the bill. They're saying, "We have the capacity to produce. Just allow us to do that. We have the capacity to make small slaughterhouses. Just approve them." If CFIA is now going to be the decision-maker, here is the standard, and it's at the level of the Cargill operation: you're going to do it this way, otherwise we are going to close you down; if you don't want to feed your animals animal proteins or hormones and antibiotics, we are not going to let you say that.

Farmers are not going to be allowed to have cooperatives and say, "We want to produce". CFIA will not approve them.

I'm surprised, Mr. Easter, that you're seeing some good in this bill without looking at those things.

•(1655)

Hon. Wayne Easter: In fact, on most of the points you've raised, it can be done. The CFIA inspection of slaughterhouses relates to our ability to trade across Canada and to export product. The provincial slaughterhouses are provincially regulated. You must know that. The fact of the matter is, producers can go to the provincial slaughterhouses. There is nothing that says, anywhere in this bill or anything else, that companies that own slaughterhouses are demanding that their products be given antibiotics or anything else.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: That's not true.

Hon. Wayne Easter: It is in fact true. And there's nothing preventing cooperatives from setting up a slaughterhouse and being federally inspected. All they have to do is meet the requirements—

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Of Parliament.

Hon. Wayne Easter: No, the requirements we've agreed to as the Government of Canada and our international competitors. The standards for a CFIA federally inspected plant are very much higher than the provincial standards.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: They are all under HACCP, sir.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Of course, they are.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Well, then, if industry is regulating itself—

Hon. Wayne Easter: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Coming back to the point, then, what you're telling me in what you've said I guess is that your concern really relates more to Bill C-28 than this one.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, both together. I think you keep pulling it that way. I never said that. I said the two bills should be one piece of legislation or the two should be discussed by both committees. That's what I'm saying.

The Chair: Time has expired. It was a good conversation.

Let's move to Madam Rivard.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: My question is for Mr. Friedlander. Earlier you told my colleague that BSE tests could only be conducted after an animal dies. How can we prevent this disease if we can't get results until an animal is dead? I can't understand why it's impossible to do tests while the animal is alive.

[English]

Mr. Lester Friedlander: The most important step in meat and poultry inspection is what we call ante-mortem inspection. That's when the animal is alive. That's when you are going to see any kind of signs of central nervous system.... It's a very important step. Once you see that, then you can segregate the animal and take brain samples and send them to the laboratory after the post-mortem is done.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: That happens after the animal dies. If we could regularly test animals on the farm, we could prevent this disease.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No. If you stop feeding animals to animals, you won't need to do that. Then the testing only comes for the animals that already have disease. But if we stop feeding animals to animals, disease will not occur. Within a matter of five to six years there will be no BSE in Canada. It's as simple as that. We won't need to keep testing.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I understand you, but we're in this situation now.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Yes.

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Your recommendation would be to standardize animal feeding across Canada to eradicate this disease.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: That's correct.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Elsewhere, in Quebec, it's prohibited to feed animals animal meal.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: This is an interesting question from a Quebec perspective. If Quebec as a province, or any province of Canada, decided they wanted to raise their animals without hormones, antibiotics, or rendered materials, they could not do that because the jurisdiction to approve or not approve belongs to the federal government. As a province, Quebec, even if they want to do it, cannot do it.

There's a problem here.

•(1700)

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: In Quebec, we haven't fed our animals animal meal since 1998.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: But you can't convince the Europeans that this is what you do, because the CFIA will not certify that you do it. That's what the problem is.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: Ms. Haydon, you wanted to respond.

[English]

Ms. Margaret Haydon: I was just going to say there are a few small producer groups in Alberta that are in the same situation and would like to do that, but they've been told their standards are too high and they won't be authorized by the CFIA. For example, one of them was going to use the waste materials from the slaughter plant as fuel to operate their slaughterhouse in the form of electricity and that sort of thing by incinerating the waste materials.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: I don't understand the connection. Could you explain it to me? I don't understand.

[English]

Ms. Margaret Haydon: It was a small slaughter plant that was proposed, and instead of sending the waste material from the slaughter plant to be fed back to animals, they were going to incinerate that waste material to generate electricity to operate their slaughter plant. They were told by the CFIA that their standards were too high.

They also wanted inspection of every single animal to make it available for the export market, and that was not allowed either.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard: We're trying to find a solution to eradicate this disease. You're in a good position to give me an answer.

In Quebec, for example, animals aren't fed animal meal. Wouldn't there be some way of ensuring that processed meat is labelled in some way? Today, we haven't talked about labelling, which is in fact very important for consumption and safety.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Even if you wanted to label, the CFIA is the federal agency. They have to certify that, yes, that's correct. Simply labelling doesn't make it safe. Somebody has to inspect it and say, yes, you are actually doing it. Quebec does not have that jurisdiction. It's not a provincial jurisdiction. It's a federal jurisdiction.

Now, if Quebec were to separate, that would be a different matter.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Drouin, five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to understand. Animal meal isn't prohibited just in Quebec, but all across the country, and has been since 1997, I believe. You seem to be saying the contrary. You seem to be saying that it's not prohibited, whereas it is. I don't understand your remarks.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Actually, that's not correct. It was an advisory that was put out not to use it. That's how it happened. Feed mills are contaminated. Animals are going.... I would encourage this committee to watch the CBC program done by The Nature of Things. It has been shown many times on the CBC, and it's produced by Dr. David Suzuki, who is a scientist. This is a program that's produced from all over the world. It's called Apocalypse Cow, and it shows you how it's being managed in the United States, in Canada, in the world, and so forth. It's a two-part series. I would encourage this committee to watch this program and find out for yourselves, rather than ask our opinions. This is an independent investigation. They went even further than we could in the discoveries they made in the United States on mad cow disease and human deaths involved.

I would encourage you to watch it. I can lend you copies if you want.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: Mr. Chopra, it seems from what you say that there's not much that works well here. We're apparently in danger because of the way we do things. However, from the results we see across the country and based on what the public tells us, people feel safe. We seem to have a good procedure. Perhaps it should be improved. Moreover, that's what we're trying to do with Bill C-27 .

We want to ensure we protect our consumers better, while maintaining a certain logic so our producers can operate normally. What interest would a multinational or a small business have in concealing information or working against the public? If it became known, the damage would be enormous. It would hurt the industry, which would be affected in the same way as everyone else. Large and small businesses alike would be hit. There'd been significant revenue losses.

I find it hard to understand your remarks in that respect.

•(1705)

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Then I have a proposal for you, sir, and for the companies and our country. It's a very simple one. Let's say we are going to take those kinds of risks for full production—and I'm even willing to say I don't know there's a risk—and for purposes of trade. We're going to start taking risks or manage risks, or what they call going from risk assessment to risk management. You're prepared to take the one-in-a-million cancer...like the U.S. has now decided, or have some people die of antimicrobial resistance. Then I'm prepared to say that if the nation wants to go there, let's do that.

Then ask the companies that are making profits from selling those products to put aside a certain amount of money, by legislation of our Canadian Parliament, so when damage occurs the public will not have to pay. Those companies should be paying from insurance money they put aside in trust funds, whether it's 10% of the profit, or whatever you decide is adequate. Why should the public pay for taking the risk? That's my question to you.

I rest my case. If this is the way it is and we want to run the country by having trade override safety, let's go there. Manage risk, but put aside the money. Why should the public pay for getting damaged, and then pay for it themselves?

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: You've answered my question with another question. I find that crafty. I asked you what interest businesses would have in camouflaging things or working against consumers' interests.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: They make money and run away.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Drouin: And yet, when a case is reported, money stops coming in, and that hurts. I find it hard to follow you.

[English]

Mr. Shiv Chopra: The most that can happen is that some people might go to jail, but meanwhile they have made money. We know what's happening to the dot-com business. We know what's happened with Vioxx and all of those painkillers and other drugs that were approved inappropriately up to now. We know this has happened, and we now know they're being withdrawn. We know that even President Bush is now worried about it. Why don't we in Canada want to do that?

The Chair: Your time has expired, Mr. Drouin.

We'll move to Mr. Angus for five minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I want to go back to the issue at hand, Bill C-27, and our ability to promote trade. That's the heart of this bill.

Dr. Friedlander, what is the likelihood of the U.S. moving toward a total animal protein ban in cattle? Should that be the standard?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I feel it should be the standard, but there'll be a lot of resistance from the industry, so there won't be a total ban. The rendering industry and the feed mill industry are multi-billion-dollar industries, and they're going to resist anything like that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: In Denmark they had a continual reoccurrence of BSE because they had a partial ban in place. Until they went to the complete and total ban, Denmark had numerous.... Most of their cases of BSE came after the partial ban.

We've had one animal born after the feed ban was put in place. What's the likelihood of us being able to move into new markets if our standards are focused on U.S. standards and not on European standards?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: You're going to have a hard time getting into those markets.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Why is that?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: It's because the standards aren't up to par.

Mr. Charlie Angus: There are a number of producer groups in Canada who are concerned about getting into these new markets—the Beef Initiative Group from Alberta that we were talking about earlier. I guess I'd like to throw it open again. In Bill C-27 we are focusing mostly on cross-border with the U.S., but what is the ability for us to use Bill C-27 to promote trade with the European Union or Japan?

• (1710)

Mr. Shiv Chopra: If we do what we are suggesting, which is to exclude the use of hormones and antibiotics for growth promotion and ban any rendered materials to be fed back to any animals, the borders of the whole world will open up to our food—all over the world, never mind the U.S. When we're talking about the U.S. as a major trading partner, don't forget Mexico in there, because we're talking NAFTA and we're not just talking about the United States.

We are going to lose our entire food production very quickly because of labour costs. Today's business is being run by banks and mega businesses, which is fine, but there's also labour involved.

Therefore, those are the kinds of issues. If you're looking into trade issues, Australia made a decision a long time ago that trade and safety assessment is part and parcel of their health risk assessment. If it affects their trade, they're not going to approve those products.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Dr. Friedlander, could you explain to me...? My wife raised goats—I didn't like the animals to begin with—and we fed them feed all the time and I had to go and get the feed, but—

The Chair: On Bill C-27.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I can't bring goats into Bill C-27. Okay.

The standard we need to have and the standard our producers and consumers want is the highest standard possible. If Bill C-27 is looking to merge our standards with the U.S., are we moving to that highest standard?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I believe you're not because, as I said, in the United States, from my experience, there's just too much conflict of interest between agribusiness and the government agency themselves.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am a producer and I find it unnerving to hear some of the comments today. I think there was a little mud slinging at the industry today, at the average producers. I want to say that I'm very proud of the producers that we have out there, the producers that are in my constituency, and the job they've done in raising a wholesome product. I think our packing industry and our food processing industry in Canada has done a fairly good job as well. Certainly it's not perfect, but I'll tell you that they've lived up to and exceeded expectations in providing a wholesome, healthy product to the consumers on a daily basis.

You guys want to hold up the European standards as a way we should be moving with Bill C-27. Well, I've got a packing plant right now in my riding that is moving fresh and frozen geese into Europe. We already exceed those standards, and most of the plants in Canada would exceed them now. We've got pork moving into Europe. We exceed European standards. We exceed American standards. We've got a great system here, and I hate to see it slandered in the way you guys have been by throwing around loose comments without having any actual fact.

You guys keep talking about the bill being no good. I'm not an advocate of Bill C-27. There are some major shortfalls in it, but some of the problems you've brought forward, like not recognizing the need to go to testing at a specific plant in Alberta...that was a management decision and it has nothing to do with the bill. Maybe we have to change some of the bureaucrats there. But the mechanism is there, and if they want to go to 100% testing in that particular plant, they could do it. We're not stopping that, and as parliamentarians we want to see that going forward. That's niche marketing, and we want to make sure those opportunities are available.

What I want to hear is that the bill lacks oversight. It doesn't have any accountability, no transparency. We're making these super-inspectors and we have to be able to have an oversight group, whether it's a combination of industry, government, bureaucrats, politicians, and farmers, having a say on how those things go forward.... We need appeal mechanisms, because sometimes things are done maliciously, fraudulently, frivolously, by mistake. We have to be able to have the ability to have that oversight and look at things in a different light outside of the bill itself.

I want to hear more on that and not just that we're doing a crappy job. I'm from the farm. I have to fork a lot of crap out in the barn, and I sure hope I don't have to bring the fork out here.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I sympathize with you, sir, but what I'm saying is, go back to base one. If there are products out there and you're not responsible for their approval...if Health Canada has told you you can use hormones and antibiotics in an unlimited manner, and rendered material for your cattle, you're not responsible. You're trying to do your best job. You're not responsible for it. It's Health Canada that has approved those things without having done any health risk assessment; therefore, you're not at fault. It's Health Canada that has not done a proper job in the first place.

Now you've moved to the CFIA, and if CFIA is not even inspecting—and CFIA itself has been complaining that Health Canada has not made the determination of whether those products that are out there for sale are safe—you producers don't know what you are doing; therefore, you have to take the word of Health Canada. If you are a province, then you have to take the word of Health Canada. You don't have independence to do whatever you want to do.

I am not saying you're doing a crappy job. I'm not saying any other people are doing a crappy job. But you as a parliamentarian certainly are not doing what you're supposed to do, because you're making your judgment as a meat producer and saying everything is fine. As a parliamentarian you're not upholding your responsibility to have an open debate, from the scientific community talking to you, or putting your research—

• (1715)

Mr. James Bezan: This is what the purpose of this is, for calling in all the expert witnesses so that we can get the information. And I'm not seeing any concrete information coming from your side. We have to have the information. If there are certain problems within the bureaucracy, within the science, then let's have it. All we're getting is a lot of hearsay in Ottawa.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: We've told you that pesticides and hormones have been demonstrated in science to cause cancer.

Mr. James Bezan: Even in the European community they recognize that there's no difference between hormone-treated beef and non-treated beef, and yet they still ban it based on non-tariff trade barriers, based on phytosanitary standards that are completely not based on science.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I think you're totally wrong, sir, because—

Mr. James Bezan: Not at all.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: —in the WTO—

Mr. James Bezan: The reality is that in that situation, what they've done in Europe, by making that ban...the product is getting used in.... Because there are so many different countries, so many different borders, the product is still moving, and it's still being done on the farm. Even though they say they don't do it, it's still getting done.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: I beg your pardon. You're misleading this group by saying that—

Mr. James Bezan: Not at all.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: —because you have no information for saying that. I'll tell you, if you go to the WTO case—

Mr. James Bezan: Produce it.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: —not as a producer; if you go to the WTO hearings—

Mr. James Bezan: Simply show us the evidence.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: —to the evidence in the WTO hearings—

Mr. James Bezan: —in the courts.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, please. One at a time.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Don't make statements and impose them on me. I'm saying you go to the evidence that has been presented before the WTO, and Health Canada and CFIA have refused to divulge the information to the WTO, calling it secret information. Is that the kind of information you're basing your information on?

I'm asking you, as parliamentarians, to let this information come out to you, so that you can make your proper decisions.

The Chair: Mr. Ritz.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an interesting discussion here.

The Government of Ontario has actually just named a deputy minister chief veterinarian post, and it sounds like exactly what you folks are asking for. I'm wondering whether, once you review that, you may find that the provinces are taking on the role you say the federal government should do. There seems to be a vacuum there, and you're pointing that out.

There are a couple of things I heard in some of the other testimony.

Dr. Lambert said Japan tests every animal. They no longer do that; they've actually pulled back from that. There's been a change in the ministry over there. They no longer do that.

Dr. Friedlander also said that the U.S. was very lax in their testing; there's a real concern there that they're not testing enough. I'm wondering, if the world stage sees that, then why does Japan—which does the most rigorous testing of foodstuffs in the world—buy more from the U.S. than anywhere else? They don't seem to be concerned.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Japan used to buy the most from the U.S. I think the number one trade partner was Japan, at the time. If the testing still in the United States is inadequate to the volume of beef we have in that country—

Mr. Gerry Ritz: But Japan isn't concerned. The customer is always right. If Japan isn't concerned about the type of testing or the amount of testing the U.S. is doing, why should we be?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Japan is concerned, though, about what age group the U.S. is testing.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: We've all gone to that, but—

The Chair: Mr. Lambert wants in.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Gérard Lambert: There are specialized export slaughterhouses in the United States. Some drugs have to be administered to the animals slaughtered there. Consequently, those animals can be exported to Japan.

There are strict measures for meeting Japanese standards. The Japanese buy from the United States because they meet Japan's standards.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Dedicated slaughterhouses simply for the Japanese market? Could you tell me where they are and who owns them?

[*Translation*]

Dr. Gérard Lambert: I think you can get that information from the U.S. government.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerry Ritz: We'll try to track that down.

There's been a lot of talk around the table here too—and it gets away from Bill C-27 a little—about the science on the feed, that the feed is the cause, but it is not an actual scientific fact that it is the feed. Everybody is saying that's their best guess on this point and it seems to be the common denominator, but there is no scientist who will say unequivocally this is it and only this. It may be a catalyst and it may be part of it, but no one is saying unequivocally it is the feed.

How do you explain, then, other central nervous system diseases, CWD in wild deer, for example? They're not eating prepared feed. There is the argument that it's spontaneous, that the feed may be a catalyst but that the animal is predisposed and the prion arrangement is such....

If there is no global scientific agreement that it's the feed, are we chasing the wrong shadow?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, you're not. In fact, that's exactly the correct information.

Your information is partial. This disease occurs spontaneously in all species, including humans. It occurs even in cats. But it gets concentrated. If you take a diseased animal with prions, with that disease, whether it's humans eating humans, as has happened.... This is how it was discovered in Papua New Guinea; it was their custom, and that's how the connection was made.

The whole information came from England. That's where the link was finally made that there was a variant strain of CJD that was doing it. There is absolutely no disagreement that feed was the cause.

For the cows in which it occurred first in the U.K. and later on throughout Europe and also in Japan, feed was the cause. Once they took the feed away, the cases began to diminish. That's pretty strong proof. You don't need big science to explain that.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: How do you explain the incidence of a parallel disease in wild deer?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Because it occurs naturally. It's spontaneous.

If one person eats a diseased animal or parts of it, then only one person gets sick. But if you take that diseased animal and recycle it, now you're multiplying that prion, and that prion cannot be killed even at 600 degrees Celsius. This is the problem.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: So the feed exacerbates the problem.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: That's right.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: It does not create the problem.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: No, feed does not create the problem. It's when you feed it back. Then it's like taking a centrifuge, precipitating it, and then spreading the disease. If you stop doing that, then the disease stops immediately from spreading.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: But it's not a 100% full stop. It still could happen spontaneously.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: It could happen to you; it could happen to me. It could happen from my eating a sheep brain that was diseased, but then the disease would stop with me or with that sheep.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: In the wild deer example, they haven't eaten another deer; they don't do that. They haven't eaten another animal; they're vegetarian. So for it to appear spontaneously, the feed would not have to be a factor at all.

Ms. Margaret Haydon: I would wonder if they're grazing on contaminated grass.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Contaminated how?

Ms. Margaret Haydon: From feces and urine, and we know—

Mr. Gerry Ritz: But there again, there is no unequivocal, scientific proof that it's spread through feces and urine.

Ms. Margaret Haydon: Well, we know tonsillar tissue is present in the intestinal tract, and that's one of the specific risk materials. I understand from a study in Israel a few years ago that prions were actually isolated from urine.

• (1725)

Mr. Gerry Ritz: We've had the CWD outbreak centred in my riding, and the source herd with BSE was centred in my riding, but there is no ground contamination. We've been testing this for years, and there's no ground contamination.

Ms. Margaret Haydon: In talking with a person from the U.K., I learned there are also concerns there that even though farms have stopped feeding contaminated feed, there is still the odd case that occurs on some farms. It may be from contamination of the environment; we don't know.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Exactly. It's a good place to end it.

Ms. Margaret Haydon: It's a possibility with deer as well.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Even if there's a very small risk of it coming through the feed to cattle and to people, it's not worth taking that risk. What's the advantage of feeding animals to animals? There is absolutely no advantage. If it's protein and you call it a good source of protein, we might as well feed it to people directly. Then they won't get sick and the cows won't get sick.

The Chair: We must wrap it up. Our time has expired. My conclusion as chair is we have less than overwhelming support from our panel today for Bill C-27.

I wonder, in conclusion, if you can give some direction to this body. We want our country to have the safest system in the world, and we want it recognized by those who buy our products. Which country do you believe has the best and safest system in the world today? I'm going to ask each one of you to respond to that question.

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Canada can be the best country in the world in food production, as it used to be. It can be and should be the best, as long as we make our decisions independently of other political influences, trade agreements, or whatever. It's simply that we are Canada.

We are a large country and a God-blessed country. We have lots of land and all the water needed for any kind of food production. Therefore we should be making our standards the highest, and not pretending we are the highest. Once we do that, the borders of the entire world will open up for our food. Let's not talk about trading with the U.S., or this trade or that.

The Chair: Ms. Haydon.

Ms. Margaret Haydon: If we make sure we look after public safety in Canada, then everything will fall into place. But we have to look after public safety first of all, right here at home.

The Chair: Dr. Lambert.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Gérard Lambert: I think Canada can become the best country, but it has to draw on the practices of other countries that have had problems. Then it has to adapt and improve its practices. But Canada can become the best country as regards food.

[*English*]

The Chair: Dr. Friedlander.

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I firmly believe, just like my colleagues, that Canada has the potential to be the number one leader in food safety consumer advocacy, if you continue going that route.

The Chair: The question was, who has the safest system in the world today, and to whom should we be looking for guidance and direction if we want to model after that particular country?

Mr. Shiv Chopra: Denmark.

The Chair: Denmark.

Dr. Friedlander, would you suggest that our system is as safe as, safer than, or equally safe as that of the United States?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: I believe, from my experience, your system is probably safer because you're finding mad cow disease.

The Chair: Did I hear safer?

Mr. Lester Friedlander: Yes, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much, panel, for your input today. We really appreciate your being here for the members, for your lines of questioning, and at times for coming back and talking about Bill C-27.

Thank you very much.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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