

Canagrex Act

have a population of over 65 million people, but what intrigued me was that with a population of that size, I am sure they would have great requirements for a lot of the products we produce in Canada. Yet I found, when talking to Taiwanese trade officials, that in the last decade there has not been a Canadian trade official in that country. What was equally astounding was that the Americans had just been there and had completed setting up a trade office, one that was becoming increasingly busy and promoting American agricultural products, thus creating an opportunity for American farmers to make sales. At the same time as I was there, the Australians were there. What were they doing? They were working on setting up an Australian trade office in Taiwan.

Where were the Canadians? They are not even in the picture yet. Taiwan is a country of 65 million people, a country which I am sure could generate a great demand for our products, yet we Canadians are not even there. Mr. Speaker, I think this bill does emphasize the importance of circumstances such as that and just how important it is for us to get out there and aggressively start marketing our grain products, which in turn will assist farmers in this country. That has not been happening in the past, I suggest, as much as it should have. It is my hope that this kind of legislation will spur that sort of activity, which will in turn benefit all of our farmers.

One of my concerns is that I remain unconvinced that our agricultural problems in Canada have been given the kind of priority that they need. We know that this particular aspect of the problem in agriculture has been promised for at least two elections. It was given cabinet approval, I believe, last February. That is almost a year ago. So we can see that the action on it has not come very quickly.

I have a few concerns about the bill which I would like to address. I see that the time for adjournment is running quite close, so I will get into this area quite quickly. One of my concerns relates to increasing government intervention in agriculture. My colleague from Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) discussed this and talked about some of the problems and concerns he has in this connection. I, too, share such areas of concern.

For example, I wonder why Canagrex is being set up as a Crown corporation. Something that has become apparent to me, as a new member of this House, is that a Crown corporation is not subject to the same scrutiny, to the same questioning, that a Member of Parliament can exercise with respect to a regular government department. Once you have a Crown corporation involved, you cannot ask the same kinds of questions and you cannot get the same type of information.

Another matter of concern to me is that instruments which regulate our farmers are becoming more and more pervasive in our country. What we have to recognize is that the regulations that are placed upon our farmers, or any other sector of our economy, as they become outdated are seldom revoked or replaced. They are left in place and more and more are added to them, until we end up with such a broad base of regulations governing our various agencies and farmers that the massive bureaucracy people are forced to constantly confront consti-

tutes an intrusion into their farming methods and farm planning.

Some regulations, of course, do help the farmers and provide them with a few things, such as greater bargaining power, some income security and so on. But what becomes primary and very focal, and is something we often tend to forget, is that our farmers must remain the focal point of our legislation. In other words, all of our agricultural legislation should be designed to meet the needs of the farmers rather than assist the government and the bureaucracy which are behind those regulations. Too often we have seen that happening, where the bureaucracy grows and begins to function for its own benefit and streamlines its own systems at the expense of the very people it was first designed to help.

It is my hope, of course, that Canagrex will be of benefit to our farmers, and I think that is something all of us will want to consider very closely as we go into committee stage and examine the legislation in much more detail.

My colleague from Lethbridge-Foothills also touched on a very significant area, the exporting of our agricultural products. In western Canada the fundamental concern we have to address before we can even talk about exports beyond our borders is getting our products from our farms to the port. The grain transportation system in western Canada has long been inadequate. It has long been less than satisfactory. Recently we have heard talk of \$3 billion being set aside for western transportation, but as yet we have seen no evidence of it. So far we have not seen any of that money being spent to improve the western grain transportation system.

My riding is a prime example of some of the difficulties people are having in the area of grain transportation. In my constituency we have three communities in which farmers are facing hauls, to take their wheat or barley from the farm to the elevator, involving a distance of 120 kilometres. Of course, that is all done at their expense. And it is not only expense which comes with the cost of fuel, truck depreciation costs, maintenance and so on, but also expense in terms of his time. Often the farmer is in a position where he has to ship his grain at a time when he is very busy on his farm. So you see a farmer having to travel 120 kilometres and leave his farm idle while he does so. The average distance from farm to terminal in Canada is only 20 kilometres, so we can see that the transportation aspect becomes very serious to these people who are trying to get their grain out to the ports before Canagrex can even begin to consider exporting it.

There have been many studies done about this very problem. There was the Hall commission report which talked about off-line elevators and how they might be designed to assist our farmers. But again, nothing came of it. So the farmers who have this transportation problem have experienced it now for several years. They still have it and it looks as though they will continue to have it for a long period of time. In the meantime the government is saving millions of dollars by reason of not having to spend money on infrastructure in those areas; the railways are saving a lot of money because they are not required to make any capital expenditures; and the elevator