

—“agricultural product” includes animals and every other natural or processed product or byproduct of agriculture, but does not include any product or byproduct that is wholly or mainly a fish or forestry product or byproduct;

By my reading of that, an agricultural product could very well be wheat or flour. Therefore, the question which immediately arises in my mind is why we are to have an instrument of government to do what is already being done by the Canadian Wheat Board. I find that rather peculiar. Or is this to be an instrument by which the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) can achieve the purpose he has long been known to hold, of capturing from the person presently responsible in Parliament for the Canadian Wheat Board, Senator Argue, responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board and including it within Canagrex?

If that is not the case, I am still obliged to ask myself why we should have another agricultural export sales organization. We already have the Canadian Wheat Board. People have been extolling its virtues. Those virtues speak for themselves. They are extollable, and I am glad they are being extolled. But why, if we have the Canadian Wheat Board in place and doing a good job, are we superimposing another organization? Perhaps, as I suggest, the Minister of Agriculture is anxious to get under his umbrella through this legislation something he has wanted to have within his control for a long time, namely, the Canadian Wheat Board. That is the first matter related to this legislation which I think is worthy of being brought to the attention of those who will be affected by Canagrex. I do not think there is any question but that with the majority here, either in its present form or in an amended form this bill will in due course become law.

I note that this bill was brought forward on December 8. That is noted on the front page. This bill was read the first time on December 8, 1981. On January 12, 1982, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) went to the theatre in the press building and announced a complete reorganization of the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. He created within the Department of External Affairs a branch to be under the general direction of a minister of state for international trade, who previously was in another ministry as a minister of state for international trade under the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray).

Two questions come to my mind as the result of this. On December 8 this bill was brought before us. On January 12 there was a reorganization respecting international trade. Why is the minister responsible for international trade not to be responsible for the Canagrex operation? It relates to international trade. The “ex” in “Canagrex” presumably means export. It might mean exploitation; I am not sure. It might mean exploitation, or does it have some other significance? Could it be exchange? Perhaps it is exchange. There is talk of the possibility of our returning to the barter business.

There is one other niggling matter at the back of my mind. In view of the great concern of the Canadian people about the budget, inflation, unemployment and so forth, why, soon after our return from the Christmas break, are we not dealing with

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those matters instead of this? Are we just treading water while the government tries to come to grips with the problems of inflation, high interest rates and so forth and until the government brings legislation to the House? I suppose when that is done this matter will be shifted, perhaps, to the Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. Lumley). Perhaps it will be shifted to the Canadian Wheat Board, because it is a matter of selling abroad, and we will have been debating here to no purpose. I wonder if there was consultation. There must have been. I am at a loss to understand how the minister can sit there and smile when there is the threat of someone else taking responsibility for agricultural products being sold outside the country, namely, the Minister of State for International Trade. I believe those two features deserve underlining right away.

There has been an extraordinary reorganization of the Department of External Affairs. The Minister of State for International Trade has moved to another organization and presumably will take over responsibility in Canada missions abroad for agricultural attachés. Admittedly, there are not enough of them. However, I assure the minister that there are a good many foreign service officers who, being generalists, are able to turn their hands to anything along that line.

• (1650)

I have personal experience having been an agent, if you like, for the sale of live beef in Central America. I had to go out to the plane on a Sunday morning in order to make sure that the cattle were offloaded. We managed to get them up to a fair in Liberia in northern Costa Rica. This is a commission that all well-trained foreign service officers are capable of carrying out if anyone were to give them the direction to do it. This was a private enterprise, if I remember correctly, and was sponsored to some extent by the province of Ontario. Ontario beef cattle were sent to Central America for breeding purposes and they were fine animals. I was proud to be able to go to the cattle fair in Costa Rica and tell the farmers that they were from Canada.

I do not believe this government has really tried to make use of the facilities that are available abroad. I hope the minister who is now in charge of international trade will do so. Perhaps he could borrow some of the specialists from the Department of Agriculture. This was one of the aspects of this great melting pot process which took place on January 12 when so much was incorporated into the Department of External Affairs.

If this organization is not going to be incorporated into the Canadian Wheat Board or absorbed by the Canadian Wheat Board, then I think the minister has to explain, either here when he winds up debate, or in committee, the relationship in his own mind between it and the reorganization of the Department of External Affairs. I think that is only fair, because when there are two separate entities bent on accomplishing the same purpose there is bound to be conflict. I do not think we need conflict in this matter and I hope the minister will be able to explain this particular aspect of the bill. Will Canagrex operate on its own abroad or through the missions abroad? Is