

*Canagrex Act*

However, we also need to import less, particularly in the area of fruit and vegetables. It is inexcusable that we spend as much on imported food as we do, something like \$5.8 billion or \$6 billion, I believe. It has been suggested that we have the potential for producing probably \$3 billion of that right here, and I would be much happier if the Minister of Agriculture came before this House with a program to encourage Canadian producers to produce more of that food right here in Canada.

**Mr. Whelan:** We have got it.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Well, bring it on. It would strengthen the total agricultural sector and help our balance of payments situation.

**Mr. Whelan:** If trade was doing such a good job, why do we have to export—

**Mr. Mazankowski:** If it were not for the sale of grain and oilseed, our agricultural trade picture would be very dismal. As a matter of fact, it has been worsening since this minister came in.

**Mr. Whelan:** Not at all.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Not at all? Well, facts and figures will bear me out.

**Mr. Whelan:** Horticultural products exports are up 32 per cent in two years.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** I have read many of the minister's speeches where he was crying about the fact that we were spending 25 cents of our food dollar on imported food, and it is probably up to 30 cents now. That is really a sad commentary on a country like Canada which has such a tremendous and significant agricultural potential. I reiterate that we need to export more, yes, but we also have to address this situation by importing less. To the extent this bill helps in that regard, I would certainly support it; but I must tell you, Sir, in all sincerity, that I am not sold on the fact it will do that.

As I said, this bill will require full committee consideration. I mentioned the joint ventures and the potential of integrating them into the production sector. While it may not be intended, I submit they can be included. The minister has great faith in this corporation. He suggests it will be the major catalyst in establishing Canada as a major trading nation. I hope he is right. He says it will expand food production and processing. He said it will mean increased income for farmers. In short, he says it will be a major shot in the arm for the economy. Well, I hope that is true because, as I said earlier, this industry is in serious trouble.

This measure may help us in the long term, but I will have to withhold judgment on that until we have further committee study. If it does help, it will be simply in the long term. What we need is some short-term assistance.

I hate to repeat this again, Mr. Speaker, but it is true and the minister knows it; the budget was a cop-out. Farmers are

hurting. They are caught in a squeeze of high interest rates, high inflation, high input costs and low commodity returns. We know farmers cannot pass on the effect of these increased costs to the consumer because a good portion of agricultural production is exported and we have to compete in international markets.

I have a letter that was sent to the minister from Peter Brown and family of Tofield. Now, the minister may not have seen it but I think it pretty well crystallizes the difficulties facing farmers in my riding. It reads as follows:

Perhaps the government could investigate the feasibility of providing long term financing for farmers at a more reasonable rate than banks, who seem to care little for the fact that farmers are the backbone of this country and that our loans are more than secured by the land and sweat that goes into it.

Surely the time has come to pay attention to the industry responsible for feeding this country but as time progresses we become more and more aware that government has put the agricultural industry on the back burner. Indeed farming in all its meaning has taken a back seat to urban development. Far too much prime land is being buried under a sea of concrete, a sea that can never be harvested again for anything productive.

Year after year farmers lose money and as in any business how long can it continue to be a losing proposition before everyone bales out and if you have no farmers you have no sustenance.

We think that Liberal government taxing policies create more and more jobs and positions for Liberals with high wages and benefits, adding new meaning to the old adage, "the rich get richer and the poor, poorer". Surely this has contributed to the poor and tarnished image of the Liberal Party.

This person recognizes what will happen with Canagrex. It will just mean more jobs for Liberals. He goes on:

We would prefer no government intervention in the beef industry. The government's track record indicates that their meddling breeds disaster with cost and inefficiency hitting all time hazard levels.

**Mr. Whelan:** I would think this man is a Liberal. He wrote me a letter that he wanted to be appointed.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** He goes on:

We fail to comprehend the Liberal views of high interest, high fuel costs, high fertilizer costs and high taxation and their apparent blindness to the chaos it is causing the average Canadian. These policies have brought the country to her knees. How can you expect us to believe that you fully comprehend a situation when it is obvious that politicians, in their salary range, have never had to worry about financial stability. If they don't know how we live how do they hope to understand and correct it?

Agriculture is a prime industry in this country and here is a farmer's view of 1981. Our beef prices dropped from \$84 per hundredweight to \$64 per hundred, our grain prices have varied little in almost ten years, our expenses have changed dramatically. Fuel used to cost us \$400 to \$500 to fill our tanks, now the same tanks cost \$1600 to \$2000 to fill. Our fertilizer and spray bills are now close to \$25,000 to \$30,000 or more in some cases. Our land taxes have doubled, repairs on machinery or the cost of replacing machinery will soon put us in the poor house. New tractors used to cost \$8,000 to \$12,000, now it is common to have to pay \$40,000 to \$120,000. Interest at the bank for operating costs have risen from 8 per cent or 10 per cent to 17 per cent and 23 per cent.

He then goes on to the Minister of Agriculture's questionnaire where he says:

In your questionnaire you ask if we'd like reduced imports of beef and beef animals and we answer that with a firm no, but when you consider that beef is imported from Australia, New Zealand and Argentina at very reduced prices compared to ours, how can we compete. Their beef is raised primarily on cheap grass with cheaper labour and when our beef is forced to compete with theirs it is chaotic and unfair. This must be changed. The farmer of Canada must receive at least as much consideration as a foreigner.