

*Canagrex*

resources, investing in research, investing in a proper support system, investing in export assistance, is that none of that has taken place.

The proposals that we open up our access to markets seems to somehow preclude taking the appropriate action within our own domestic spirit. We are not helping to modernize the system, or provide for the innovation in the system, or the development of the markets in the system. That goes back to a fundamental flaw in the approach to trade, whether it is in agriculture or any other product. You cannot improve your capacity for trade unless you are also improving those products within your own domestic market-place, and the capacity to meet international demands and requirements.

Not only is it a question of promises not being fulfilled, but many of the important and constructive programs are being eliminated. How can a cut-back in agricultural research be justified? How can anyone in their right mind assume that we will be able to respond to new international competitive forces when we are cutting back on our research stations, or university programs on agricultural research? It simply begs logic and common sense to do that. Yet, that is what is going on. You only have to look at every resolution passed by every farm organization to say, "For God's sake, stop this insanity." At least in one area give us the capacity to keep our industry and commodities up to date and innovative. Nothing but a blind eye and a deaf ear has been turned to those pleas. As a result, we are substantially weakening the ability of our agricultural sector to compete and provide for the kind of forward-looking markets needed in the future.

**Mr. Gauthier:** I would like to ask my colleague for Winnipeg—Fort Garry a question relating to the last point he made. Indeed, we are playing into the hands of the Americans somewhat in destroying Canagrex and reducing the competitiveness of Canadian farm producers by not having a government corporation doing the marketing for those farmers. How does he see this having an impact on our commercial relations with the Americans? Does he see this as a move on the part of the Government to destroy Canagrex so that they will kowtow to the Americans a little better and make friends? Then they indeed can get the free trade deal back on track, so the Americans feel happy about it? Does he feel that there is any relationship between the free trade negotiations and the fact that the Government has destroyed Canagrex?

**Mr. Axworthy:** It has been quite apparent in the statements made by the trade negotiator for the United States, as well as other officials in the United States, and Members of Congress, that they do not like the way we do business in Canada. They think we should be like them. As a result, one of the threats that we face in the Canada-U.S. negotiations is a clear challenge to things like our marketing board system, our supply management system and our transportation support programs. They are clearly part of what is being challenged.

• (1220)

I might refer the Hon. Member to a study done by the Canada West Foundation which came out just this month. It points out that a number of key agricultural sectors in western Canada, such as the feather trades, egg, poultry, turkey, and others, and the vegetable and horticultural trades would be wiped out at a moment's notice: they would not last 24 hours under Canada-U.S. negotiation.

It is very clear that what this Government is doing right across the board is tailoring many of its own domestic responses and programs to suit what it thinks is a compatible appearance and perception by the Americans. As a result the Americans do not like the idea that we would use the constructive ability of government to assist in these areas, whether it be by marketing boards or trading corporations to try to develop those areas. I think the Hon. Member has made an important point. We cannot ignore the clear relationship between the obsession regarding Canada-U.S. trade and the unwillingness to go forward to help our commodity producers to develop new markets through an operation like Canagrex.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The period provided for questions and comments has now expired. Is the House ready for the question? The question is as follows:—

[English]

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell):** Madam Speaker, I was afraid for a moment that you had not seen me. I would not want to miss this opportunity to contribute to the debate on the destruction of Canagrex by the Tories.

I would like to begin my remarks by congratulating you on your new position in the Chair which I have not yet had the opportunity to do. I know that you will discharge your functions with utmost non-partisanship. I am sure you will excel in that way and I want to take this opportunity to offer you my personal congratulations.

I am going to speak a little bit about this measure of the Conservative Government to dissolve Canagrex, although the words should really be to destroy Canagrex. Why are the Conservatives so bent on getting rid of this organization? Is it merely a partisan gesture on their part? You, being the non-partisan person that you are, Madam Speaker, would know how partisan those Tories can be on occasion. But why destroy Canagrex? Why do it now?

Let me look into those two issues; first, the Bill. It is a very small piece of legislation with very few clauses. It has enormous ramifications as I see it on the agricultural industry of our country. The question that begs to be asked is, does this Bill have support in the farming community? It does not if we go back to the original group of people who supported the concept of having an international strategy through Canagrex in the first place. Let me list some of the people who advocated Canagrex and supported its establishment: the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Eastern Ontario Potato