

Canagrex

and women who work at this center which is now well-known throughout the province and even the country.

Canada also has a great export potential. We have more and more production surpluses and we are offering competitive and quality products. Even though I could have chosen those of representatives of Quebec agriculture, I would like to quote the words of the Chairman of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Mr. Pelissero, who asked this shocking question in the October 14 issue of *Farm & Country*;

● (1610)

[English]

"Should Canada quit farming"?

[Translation]

The article referred to the somewhat pointless comments of some so-called experts who have had enough of agriculture, who consider that too much money is being spent on agriculture and who believe that all Canadian farmers are crybabies. Mr. Pelissero rightly said the following:

[English]

Let's make one thing clear. Our industry's problems are many. Their roots, however, can be traced not to the farmer, but to a world market and to an industry in a state of flux.

Should Canada quit farming?

Ask the suppliers and dealers who sell \$14 billion worth of equipment, feed, seed, lumber and chemicals to Canada's farmers.

Ask Canadian consumers who spend the second lowest amount of money—as a share of personal disposable income—on food in the industrialized world, thanks to Canadian farmers' super-high productivity.

Ask the one Canadian in five whose job depends on the agri-food system, Canada's largest industry. Its foundation, of course, is the farmer.

[Translation]

This statement by the Chairman of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who was obviously thinking about his own field of interest and the good of agriculture, illustrates the importance of this industry for Canada. At the end, he asked this question:

[English]

To this farmer, asking the question "Should Canada quit farming"? is asking the question "Should Canada quit"?

For him the answer is clear. No.

[Translation]

The situation is somewhat the same for this Government which seeks in difficult fiscal conditions, which leads me to talk about those government agencies that were created, unfortunately, with all the best intentions in the world, and as you know, the road to hell is paved with the best of intentions. Whenever for reasons that are generous, and marvelous—motherhood and apple pie—government corporations suddenly crop up, those so-called Crown corporations which very soon part from government to go their own way and enter with their bureaucracy into what I would call a life of positive homeostasis, an on-going tendency to self-fattening, and very soon strike off from their vocabulary the word productivity, or doing more with less, all things which they lack. And their by-products are

supplementary estimates, special budgets, special projects, etc. All that is fine when the Government in power does not care a damn for the tax dollars of Canadian men and women. But when we are faced with a situation like ours, which is to manage budgetary decline, well, this creates a number of problems. And those government agencies that were set up with the best intentions in the world end up costing fortunes without fulfilling the purposes for which they were created. Also it is extremely difficult for the Government to back-track.

What we are doing is winding down Canagrex, which, as suggested by the previous speaker, was established with the best intentions in the world. Everyone is for motherhood, expansion, and of course for setting up all kinds of agencies to support agriculture.

But what we are asking is this: At what price? Do the producers, the farmers, the guy and his wife down there working the fields, benefit directly from this? That is exactly what we are doing when we are tapping the agencies that we have, the Department of External Affairs, the provincial Governments with their own agencies, the private industry which is involved in promotion.

As we were saying a while ago, the agri-food industry is one of the most important industries in Canada. The private sector itself is playing an increasingly important role and in order to foster its own expansion, it must also be involved in promotion, and that is what this Government is asking its agencies to do, achieving more with fewer resources, to question their own performance, to give agriculture a high priority in their programs and attitudes, and to keep in mind the significance of this industry when they are promoting Canada abroad.

So, what we must do with these organizations is to assume, assure and favour the promotion and development of new markets; to seek financial supports of every kind for potential exporters, and encourage the exchange of advice in a climate of co-operation, working hand in hand with the agri-food industry. Clearly, what has been shown, I think, and I heard my hon. friend refer to Canagrex's wake . . . You know, I do not think anybody here will cry over Canagrex's demise. Absolutely nobody. As far as I know, no producer, either in my own riding or elsewhere, has shed even crocodile tears over it. The producer is more interested in finding new markets for his products, new ways to sell our surpluses; he wants existing Government marketing agencies to land major sales contracts and every interested party to play a more effective role in this country.

With respect to most Crown corporations, the view of the Conservative Government is that the concept is not necessarily bad in itself, but they must indeed be a necessary evil if they have to be established.

Our main objective as a Government is to make sure that this country and its farming community will have as many