

employing people, giving direction to a large and ever-growing segment of the population or providing opportunities in the entire agricultural sector.

● (1600)

I believe very sincerely that eventually this will come about, whether or not we as politicians pursue the issue. We should not as a country be faced with a situation where most products can be produced elsewhere in the world more cheaply than in Canada, particularly when our industry is an outstanding example. In my opinion, the industry has to come to the fore. I think we should help it along and give it Canadian attention. Our goal should be to become a superpower by the latter part of this decade, a superpower unquestioned in the world as far as producing, shipping, processing, packing and supplying to an ever-growing population are concerned. Agriculture is probably the most important product aside from water which our planet has to offer.

We will not accomplish this objective if we put our heads in the sand, as has the Minister of Agriculture. We cannot move in that direction with the idea that somehow everything must be controlled or that we have a market for a product and we produce only for that market, nothing else. We cannot move toward superpower status in terms of agriculture by building a Canagrex. Incidentally, we do not hear many people talking about Canada being a superpower in anything any longer. As I was saying, we cannot become a superpower in agriculture by building a Canagrex, a Government marketing system in which the Government participates with the private sector from time to time as it deems necessary, especially when we consider the various problems with such a marketing approach.

At the present time we should be moving in almost the opposite direction, but we are taking the wrong approach primarily because the Minister of Agriculture is not innovative. Certainly his thinking is not dynamic, and I think I am charitable when I say that. He no longer has the credibility which a Minister of Agriculture should have. It could be, if it is not, our single largest export earner, employing approximately a quarter of our population. The Minister does not have the stature or the clout in terms of political will which must be generated to move in this direction. We have inherent structural problems, but I hope the Minister will sit down with his officials and take a hard look at the direction in which they are pushing or prodding the agricultural community. If they do so, they will discover that they are headed down the wrong track and hopefully will make some changes.

In terms of the agricultural superpower strategy which I have outlined this afternoon, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. The light is that hopefully within one and a half to two years we will be into an election campaign. The political parties of the country have the chance between now and the upcoming election campaign to work toward an agri-food strategy or an industrial strategy which includes agriculture as it has never been included before. I can foresee such a strategy coming out of my particular Party. I think it is necessary,

logical and, above all, correct, so it will not be very difficult to implement or sell to Canadians.

While Canadian agriculture is in a very serious situation at present, it will survive. But it needs hope and direction. It is not obtaining hope or direction from the Minister of Agriculture, who frankly likes to navel gaze. He likes to look, if not at his navel, at his feet in terms of the direction in which he wants the agricultural community to move. The direction is so clear in terms of where we should be going that farmers or primary producers would certainly be willing to move toward it. The 25 per cent of the population employed in agriculture would be ready to move in that direction because they would find security in jobs and expanded job opportunities. The country would benefit because of the volume of products shipped to various parts of the world. The Canadian infrastructure would benefit because we would use it more consistently in terms of moving agricultural products, not only around the country but offshore as well. The people of the world would benefit because we would be supplying more agricultural products, at presumably the best prices we could afford, to other lands.

It is a dynamic policy, a dynamic idea. It is something we could look back on in the future and say that for once as a country we made the correct decision in making agri-food the centre of a very dynamic, fast-growing and far-reaching industrial strategy which provided tremendous prosperity.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the subject we are discussing, the Farm Credit Corporation, has very much been in the minds of Hon. Members of Parliament for the last two years. I do not think it is any secret that in the spring of 1981 half a dozen Members on this side of the House made several proposals on how we could reduce interest rates for farmers under this legislation. They were put before the Government and seemingly obtained the support of the Minister who nodded approval. Here we are two years later and nothing has been forthcoming except this mouse of a bill which is currently before us.

I re-emphasize what the Hon. Member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) has just said very quietly. He was trying to say that one of the big opportunities for Canada to get back into forward growth is the use of the tremendous potential of the agricultural industry. The Minister has said this repeatedly, but where he is being condemned is that he does not follow through with positive and simple ideas to get it moving forward.

● (1610)

I do not believe I have heard the figures but I will give them anyway. The capital structure in the farm industry across Canada is \$130 billion. Most of that investment in the industry has come about during the last two decades. Part of that investment was realized because of the Farm Credit Corporation. I acknowledge that the banks and the machinery companies have participated in that capital infusion, but the Farm Credit Corporation Act of 1959 is one of the best examples that Parliament can offer of constructive legislation which has not cost the taxpayer anything in the last three or four