

Canagrex

was composed of members of all Parties. The House Leaders may very well have different points of view on fine tuning and changes. We will certainly look at it and try to incorporate in a co-operative and collective manner its proposals, as best we can. That would be as far as I could go at this particular time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion (Mr. Mazankowski) agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANAGREX DISSOLUTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Tuesday, March 31, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wise that Bill C-2, an Act to dissolve Canagrex and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, when we last debated this Bill on March 31, I was attempting to make a number of points about what has happened to Canagrex. I want to follow up on those thoughts.

● (1520)

I think it was a real mistake for the Government to take this step of eliminating Canagrex. It was put in place to deal with exactly the kind of situation we have found ourselves in over the last two to three years. Canagrex was born out of the neglect of the Department of External Affairs to put in place a structure which would allow the sale and export of certain agricultural products.

Over the eight months it was in place Canagrex did a commendable job. It surveyed producers to determine the products available for export. It started negotiations with producers here in Canada and purchasers abroad. It set up a structure which would have seen a considerable expansion of agricultural exports. It started a buyer credit guarantee program which, had it the time, would have worked out very well. Canagrex agreed to share a certain amount of the risk involved in providing credit to a purchaser buying agricultural commodities from Canada. The guarantee was provided when it was deemed absolutely necessary for the sale to go ahead. I suppose the most important fact about Canagrex is that it was well planned. It had a very good corporate image around the world and had developed a reputation for being aggressive but fair.

When the Government decided to eliminate Canagrex it was supposed to put in place a structure which would work as well

as or better than Canagrex. However, Canagrex was eliminated before that was done. The situation now is that no one seems to have the responsibility for doing the same things that Canagrex was attempting to do. Consequently, instead of developing our agricultural exports over the last two to three years, we have had a continual downgrading or slippage in the amount of those exports.

Of course, we have done well in the sale of those agricultural products we have traditionally sold. The Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Mayer) will stand up and tell you we have sold more grain over this last year than we have for many years. He is quite correct. However, he will not tell you that we sold it at a much lower price than we have ever sold it before.

The Department of External Affairs can show you a list of 22 officers in our embassies abroad who have some responsibility for agricultural products. Seven of those people have been seconded from the Department of Agriculture. The Department tells us that there are positions accounting for 73 person-years with some responsibility for the sale of agricultural products. I would point out that Canagrex had that core of people available on a full-time basis.

However, these people in the Department of External Affairs, located in places like Nigeria, Algeria, Brazil, Australia, England, France and Germany, are commercial officers with responsibilities other than simply agricultural sales. I have here a list of 22 officers in the Department of External Affairs who are identified as international agri-food trade development officers. However, some of them are First Secretaries or Second Secretaries. Some of them are Counsellors. In other words, they have other duties. They do not have a great deal of responsibility for the sale of agricultural products. Consequently, the net effect of the elimination of Canagrex has been to reduce the amount of sales that we could have had to those countries.

Canagrex also went into countries we had not dealt with before in order to make sales. With the elimination of Canagrex we do not have anyone dealing with those countries. I would also point out that none of the positions which External Affairs is now designating as having some responsibility for agricultural sales were created because of the demise of Canagrex. The situation now is that the job of assisting the small producer has been splintered among the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Agriculture, DRIE, and the EDC. These groups cannot provide the assistance and information that Canagrex did.

All in all, the real efforts Canagrex made to provide service to agricultural exporters have been lost. No money was allocated and no personnel were appointed to help those exporters when Canagrex was eliminated.

● (1530)

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. My riding in east central Saskatchewan is very rural