

Canagrex Act

I am not only interested in the international market for agricultural products, but I am concerned about all our marketing. Canada is a major trading nation but it is not exploiting what it should be exploiting with respect to international trade. The reason for this is that we have not been sufficiently aggressive or had the required interest to seek out those international markets. I say this with all sincerity and honesty.

If one looks at our competitors and the instruments made available to them, one would see how weak and ineffective we are in creating our own instruments. I decry the absence of a national trading corporation which would have the aggressive stance that Canagrex will have. As the hon. member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) candidly indicated, this will be a corporation which will be actively engaged in the marketing, promotion and sale of our products as a corporation or through joint ventures or through whatever marketing arrangements it deems fit to make. But it will be in the field of promoting agriculture. Without a stable market the producer will not be encouraged to make the enormous investments now required in agriculture.

In my view, the Minister of Agriculture is one of the best we have ever had in Canada and I know at least one other man who would believe that. I say to the minister that this is a bill which is essential, not only in terms of agriculture but one which is following in the tradition of the Canadian Wheat Board, and will undoubtedly be emulated by the creation of similar instruments to enable Canada to market all of its vast variety of products, goods and services that the Canadian brain has been able to develop.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Blais: Of course.

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, the minister said that he was interested, as a member of cabinet, in the problems that exist for farmers. Has the minister looked into the very serious situation which exists for the farmer in relation to the continuation of the family farm within the budget provisions relating to annuities and so on?

Mr. Blais: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, would the minister entertain a further question?

Mr. Blais: Of course, if it is as easy as the last one.

Mr. Oberle: I do not know if it is as easy as the last one, but the minister spoke very eloquently about the Canadian Wheat Board. He said that it is a very effective agency and an exemplary one which other nations should copy. If this agency is so effective, can the minister tell us why it is selling wheat to the European Economic Community, coarse grain, for less than half the price it is resold at, and why it is selling wheat

and other coarse grains to Japan, for instance, for less than the price of production in our own country?

● (1640)

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased if the hon. member would provide me with the figures he has. One of the abilities of the Canadian Wheat Board is that it has knowledge of the marketplace in which it is operating, and it is able to liquidate its stock at the best possible price by being very, very secretive about the prices it obtains for its commodities from various sources. I would not want the hon. gentleman thinking that even if I had information—which I do not—concerning how much was obtained in which market by the Canadian Wheat Board for the Canadian farmer, I would let him know, because what I look at is the bottom line—how much the farmer who produces the wheat gets at the end of the year for the wheat he has entrusted to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Oberle: It is below the cost of production.

Mr. Blais: It is not lower than the cost of production.

Mr. Oberle: Try farming some day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tousignant): Order, please. This is not the question period, and I am afraid we cannot entertain any more questions.

Mr. Blais: Go ahead. I am never asked any in the question period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tousignant): I think the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) should now be given the floor.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, it is useful to remind ourselves every once in a while of the purpose of second reading debate. A number of speakers have addressed themselves to that without defining the purpose of second reading debate but, as I say, it is useful to remind ourselves of just what we are doing here at this time.

To my way of thinking we are highlighting and underlining some of the peculiarities of the bill before us, some special features it might contain, and drawing them to the attention of those upon whom this bill will have an impact so that they will know what that impact will be.

The consequence of this underlining and highlighting will render the treatment of the bill, when it reaches committee, much more effective, because at that time, because of our underlining and highlighting these features, those upon whom the bill will have an impact will be able to come to the committee and present their particular cases.

One of the first peculiarities which comes to my attention when I examine this bill is in Clause 2, which provides definitions. I will come back to the acronym "Canagrex" in a minute, but according to the definition contained in Clause 2—Canagrex is to be concerned with agricultural products—agricultural products are defined in the following manner: