

Canagrex Act

trouble paying for it, but the fact is that it has been available in large quantities and at reasonable prices relative to the average wage in Canada. If the family unit is destroyed, it will not only have a serious effect on our domestic production but on the ability to export and compete with foreign producers.

I must be fair and talk about some of the favourable provisions in the budget for the farmer. There is \$50 million to assist the Farm Credit Corporation which is made up of \$45 million in loans to be made available at lower interest rates. This \$45 million, relative to the number of farms, is not a lot of money. Of the \$50 million, there is \$5 million in direct assistance to farmers to help them with interest costs. This \$5 million is available to farmers over a two-year period. That works out to \$15 per farm over the two-year period. That is what the Minister of Agriculture did for the farming community in the budget. As I said, we have to give him credit for that. Although it is not very much, \$15 per farm over two years, I suppose we have to be thankful for it.

To turn to the matter of transportation, in western Canada we are capable of growing much more for export than we are able to transport to the export terminal. Unless the government shows some leadership in assuming responsibility for providing proper transportation systems in Canada, not only for grain but for potatoes which maritimers are having difficulty moving, it becomes a moot point whether we need an export corporation like Canagrex. Unless the government takes positive steps to improve transportation facilities, then Canagrex will have no opportunity to function.

It has been pointed out that we do have some knowledgeable agricultural people attached to embassies around the world. However, there are very few. If I remember correctly, when the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Wise) spoke on Monday, he said that of the some 100 embassies around the world there were only ten people knowledgeable in agriculture attached to them. I suggest it would be sensible to study this matter and provide knowledgeable agricultural people for those embassies so they will be able to work with foreign buyers and encourage exports.

There are many other areas of concern in this bill. During second reading I tried to point out some of the concerns we now have and which we must deal with in terms of domestic production before we can anticipate competing internationally. Unless the government addresses these problems quickly, I suggest to this government and this minister that we will be in danger of setting up an export corporation with nothing to export.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on the performance of the Minister of Agriculture. The minister has been in office for almost ten years. I have often heard him talk about the problems in Canadian agriculture but I have never seen him tackle those problems. I challenge members opposite to point out to me some of the major programs that this minister has put into effect which will be a lasting legacy to his tenure in that very prestigious position he occupies. I cannot think of one.

• (1610)

Hopefully if we can improve our production at home and give our farmers the incentive to produce again—we know they will produce if they are given incentive—then we can make use of this Canagrex legislation. Perhaps it will be the one thing which will be testimony to some of the good things this minister did when he was in office.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, to the comments of the hon. member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer) I would like to add that in the last five years the only piece of agricultural legislation which has been before this House has been the recently passed meat import law. My colleagues who have been here for a longer period tell me that in the five years before that there was no agricultural legislation passed or brought forward.

Canagrex is intended to be a publicly-owned corporation. Public ownership has become part of the structure and fibre of our country. It is part of our everyday life. Basically there are three large groups of Crown corporations or public ownership groups. There is direct government ownership by municipalities, the provinces and the country. This includes buildings, canals, roads and those utilities which are necessary for the operation of the country.

There is another kind of public ownership which is direct ownership by groups of people in co-ops. These are also a type of public ownership. They have done much and are very important to the fibre of the country. These co-ops are the banding together of similarly motivated people for a particular reason, usually to protect themselves against some kind of exploitation. If we were to look at unions closely, I think we would have to say that they are a type of a co-op. They are the banding together of people to protect themselves.

Finally, there is a third group of publicly-owned institutions owned indirectly by government. Such institutions are a form of Crown corporation.

Over the years public ownership has become an effective social movement in which we as citizens have placed our faith and trust and from which we have come to expect a certain kind of service. We expect that service to be provided efficiently and effectively and with a minimum of cost and waste.

In Canada we have expected that publicly-owned concerns display a certain amount of public conscience. We expect that any publicly-owned business—a building or a utility—will operate for the benefit of the group being served or the people in its particular area of the country. We expect them to operate generally for the benefit of the whole population. We expect publicly-owned corporations or businesses to have a different outlook and a different policy respecting matters of conservation, ecology, labour relations, exploitation of resources and pollution. We also expect government ownership to be an instrument of government policy.

Sometimes we have a tendency to become angry with a corporation if it does not live up to our expectations, when what we should really be doing is becoming angry with the government for not establishing a relationship between itself