

In recent months, copies of Bill C-85 to establish the Canagrex Corporation have been distributed, but from the controversy the Bill continues to raise, it would seem that our opponents have not bothered to read the actual text of the Bill.

Following certain concerns that were expressed, we made 14 substantial changes in the Bill, and I may point out that they were made to meet the demands of the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party.

Opponents of the Bill have based their charge of a takeover of the agricultural industry on three specific points: the purchase and sales aspect, the power to purchase property, and the Corporation's accountability. Every time, opponents to the Bill have managed to misrepresent the provisions of the Bill.

The powers of Canagrex with respect to the purchase and sales of products can be exercised only within the framework of its mandate, which is to promote and facilitate export sales of agricultural products and to proceed with the sale of such products, subject to the following restrictions. Canagrex may engage in export sales of agricultural products only when it is asked to enter into ventures jointly or in co-operation with companies, co-operatives, marketing boards, or individuals carrying on business in Canada, or within the framework of contracts with foreign governments.

The power to purchase, lease or otherwise acquire and hold real and personal property for actual use by the Corporation does not include the power to purchase, lease or otherwise acquire real property for the production of fruit, forage, grain, vegetable or other crops, the raising of cattle, poultry, sheep, swine or other livestock or the processing of any agricultural product or food product.

● (1120)

How can anyone be more precise, Mr. Speaker? Canagrex will not act unilaterally and be able to disregard agents now engaged in the international trade of agricultural products, I repeat, Canagrex will not be able to disregard agents now engaged in the international trade or to act as primary producer. That is very important because our colleagues opposite have often questioned the very existence or the aims of Canagrex. It was stated in false advertising that Canagrex would be in a position to act as primary producer, but that is false, Mr. Speaker. The legislation is quite clear in that respect and anyone who maintains the opposite view is unfair and can only be trying to mislead the people.

As to criticisms about Canagrex being empowered to sign cooperative agreements with private commercial and agricultural organizations, I would point out that a good many provincial Crown corporations in Saskatchewan, Quebec and Prince Edward Island already have the power to buy, sell or hold real property. In fact, under the Agricultural Products Board Act, the Federal Government has had the power to buy and sell since 1952. Never did the provinces and the Federal

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Government abuse that power, and things will not be any different with Canagrex.

As to the accountability of the corporation, the Bill provides for an annual comprehensive audit by the Auditor General. No other Crown corporation is subjected to such an audit and I must point out that the Auditor General, Mr. Kenneth Dye, was quite pleased with that provision. Being on that committee myself, I was very glad to see that Mr. Kenneth Dye had commended the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and Agriculture Canada for advocating that kind of control over a new Crown corporation. I really wonder how anyone can be critical of a Crown corporation whose accountability has been praised by the Auditor General himself.

Some people have claimed that they are not against the kind of power which Canagrex would have, but they would rather extend it only to existing corporations. I have only one comment to make in that respect, Mr. Speaker: since those corporations deal as well in the promotion of footwear, electronic equipment and agricultural products, which products will they promote first? Not food products, if the lack of respect sometimes shown for agriculture is an indication. What we need and what the Federation is asking for is a corporation which would deal exclusively in exports of agricultural products.

There can be no doubt that the private sector and the taxpayers are very well protected. We have done everything to ensure that Canagrex will show responsibility in exercising its powers. Briefly, Canagrex has the following powers: publish information on the markets, offer publicity and information services, make and give loans and guarantees; upon request, enter into cooperative contracts with private enterprises, marketing boards and cooperatives; enter into contracts with foreign governments; make grants or contributions to speed up promotion or development projects or the installation of the necessary infrastructures.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue to speak at length on this Bill, but I must conclude since the time allotted to me has ended.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of disgust that I rise to speak in the House of Commons this morning. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) are making a definite attempt to socialize a basic industry in Canada, that of producing food or agriculture in general.

● (1125)

It is absolutely distressing to see the Prime Minister allow the Minister of Agriculture to get away with it. We have to recognize that it was 5,000 years ago that an individual sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge. That is exactly what is happening in the House of Commons today. The Minister of Agriculture says he just wants a window on the industry. We heard that message some time ago when the then Minister of