

Government Orders

The Bloc Quebecois believes that sovereignty is the indispensable tool which will allow Quebec agriculture to fare better. I want to stress that bills like the one before us this afternoon are surely very important, but we should keep in mind that there are other urgent issues to deal with.

Bill C-49 reflects the government's desire to make changes within the Department of Agriculture. I sincerely hope that it will meet the provinces' concerns and that the government will not take advantage of this to confuse further the issue of provincial jurisdiction.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and his secretary of state that it is not by changing a name that they will solve the agricultural problems in Quebec. It will take the will to change, and things have to change.

• (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mississauga West—Pearson International Airport; the hon. member for Calgary West—The Constitution.

[*English*]

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit when I first laid eyes on Bill C-49 I had no idea it would be so convoluted and complicated. Today we have heard two speeches that went into great detail and involvement in the department of agriculture. Certainly I had no reason to expect what we saw yesterday with the amendments in Bill C-49. There were voice votes and all matters of things I had not anticipated we would see in a bill that I originally thought was a very lackluster one containing absolutely nothing.

The federal department of agriculture certainly needs more than just a name change. As laudable as Bill C-49 is, to reflect the reorganization of the department made in June 1993 we need to do much more to restore hope for the future in the agriculture industry. Today I would like to place before this House a proposal for reforming the entire jurisdictional areas of the agriculture industry.

My proposal builds on statements and ideas put forward in this House by my colleagues on this side beginning last May. It also reflects the ideas that are being generated and talked about by many farmers, academics, and farm leaders right across this country. There is a real momentum building to radically alter and redesign how governments and industry function together in

agriculture, in other natural resource sectors and the other many sectors of our society.

This is an issue where people are way ahead of governments in their thinking, their ideas, and their proposals. It is time to lay those ideas and those proposals out on the table to look at them honestly and openly, to have the debate and discussion needed to move forward. I am not suggesting in any way that what I will share today will be the final word in the way things should ultimately be but, it is a starting point for discussion and dialogue.

Our proposal builds on Reform's vision for reconfederating agriculture on the basis of a clearer division of responsibilities for both levels of government and for the industry. It also lays the foundation for a new visionary, comprehensive and cohesive Canadian agri-food policy.

The new governance system proposed here calls for decisions to be made at the lowest most local level at which decisions can reasonably be made. The task of the larger unit is to assist or support the individual industry or more local government bodies in carrying out these tasks. This new governance entails a devolution of senior government responsibilities to the provincial and local levels and to the industry and the citizens themselves.

Consequently we should have a leaner and more strategic senior level of government to deal with norms, standards, general directions and values over and beyond the managerial tasks that can be handled effectively at that level. The system would be more community owned with the federal government in a more catalytic role. It would call for local and provincial governments to minister to the public and to deliver the service best adapted to the diverse needs of different communities.

Such devolution might entail a Canadian governance system of the year 2020 in which a small percentage of the agri-food civil service will be federal. It would be organized into small units concerned with longer term national policy in the areas of trade arrangements, financial support, and safety and health standards. Again, although there is an attempt in this proposal to more clearly delineate jurisdictional responsibilities in the agri-food sector, this does not mean an absolutely watertight allocation of tasks among players.

This new system of governance tries to reconcile contradictory tendencies, for example the need to be global in outlook but local in application, to be small and big, to be centralized and decentralized, to be capable of generating both freedom and justice for all the players. This therefore must and will be an ongoing process of learning.