

*Canagrex*

Madam Speaker, from those kinds of incomes. They do not have a lot of money to go out and develop a market for a new product and catch the attention of the Chinese, the Taiwanese, the Filipinos, the Germans or the Austrians. They have to rely on an agency like Canagrex was seen to be, to provide some of this preliminary work. It could provide services in the language of the country they were targeting, do the initial spade work, use contacts throughout government agencies, and begin the process of finding a market for this new product.

These farmers are now back on their own little plot of ground dreaming their individual dreams, knowing that they can produce peas or honey or alfalfa seeds, those kinds of small products, efficiently and could increase their production four, five, six or maybe even 10 times, but there is no place for them to market the product. There is no agency in the private sector interested in these products unless they can make a profit. They are not willing to spend a year or two or three in market development so they can, in the long term, show a profit and expand the agricultural industry in this country. The private sector can only afford to work on very short-term solutions with products which they may trade in occasionally when there is a real shortage in the part of the world of which they have knowledge. They may run out then and offer some contracts for some peas, for instance, which is an occasionally popular crop in my particular corner of the country. Then, within two or three years, they are no longer interested in purchasing peas, and farmers who have built up their production capacity sit with the crop in their graneries wondering what to do with it.

● (1600)

Canagrex had a function to serve. Unfortunately it did not fit in with the philosophy of the current Government and so had to die the same death as the Avro Arrow had to suffer. Canagrex will be relegated to memory. Perhaps some people will maintain the memory and continue to think of ways of combining the products from various provinces to permit their export in sufficient volumes to sustain an exportable position. However, in the meantime the Government is determined to do away with the corpse of the creature it created two years ago.

At this wake we can only say that it showed great promise, its life was very short, and it had no opportunity to show what could be done or to prove that it was filling a niche which needed to be filled in Canadian agriculture. Its successors have yet to fill the holes which were left. There is very little opportunity for an agency to accumulate products from across provincial boundaries for export. The Ag Products Board can buy products, but usually it only operates when extreme surpluses of product hit the market. The Ag Products Board generally only takes those products off the market so that the price does not collapse even further. It is not set up to be exporters as such, but rather as part of the stabilization and pricing system of our agricultural industry, and it has nothing to do with agricultural exports.

The Minister says that his Department will spend more time assisting with the promotion of the export of Canadian agricultural and food products. We have not seen very many concrete results from this activity. The Minister did not give any examples today even though his Department has apparently been instructed to be involved in this for the past two years. We have not seen any of the agencies which the Minister named today entering into contracts with Canadian companies, co-operatives, marketing boards, associations or other Canadian enterprises or individuals who are carrying on business in Canada to act as their marketing representative in marketing agricultural products and food products or to provide managerial, technological, marketing or other counselling and consulting services to them, except for some of those products of which we are quite large producers at this time.

We do not have much direction with regard to the very small specialty crops and products which agriculture in this country is capable of producing. We tend to ignore such problems at the moment. There is no existing agency available to Canadian agricultural exporters which will do that which Canagrex was mandated to do, that is, to enter into joint ventures, at the request of Governments, with Canadian companies, co-operatives, marketing boards, etcetra, to carry on business inside as well as outside of Canada.

There has only been one attempt in this Parliament to get the various provincial marketing boards together. One of the first Bills which the Government introduced was to permit tobacco to be marketed under the Farm Products Marketing Council. The Government still insists that that legislation not be made available to producers under provincial marketing boards which want to expand their mandate across provincial borders. The Government has taken the position that only those products which the Government prefers to name may have that privilege. Producers of all products in the country have not been given the same rights of access to marketing across provincial boundaries or to set up a national marketing agency. That has been very strictly controlled by the Government which says that only those products which have been named, namely eggs, chicken, turkey, and now tobacco, can have such access to markets.

The Government has left red meat producers, fruit and vegetable producers, honey producers and seed producers, which trade on a much smaller basis, to fend for themselves. They are free to attempt to arrange a market with Japan, for example, but they cannot afford that kind of marketing with the small volumes generated within a province. For such marketing thrusts to be useful a multiprovince effort is required. That ability has been taken away by the Government through its restrictive approach to the National Products Marketing Act and through its attitude toward Canagrex, which was a much more flexible agency through which to handle such requirements.

I regret that the Government insists on bringing this back to the House. The agency has been closed down. The members of