

Time Allocation

May I ask the Member from New Brunswick who just chirped up a few moments ago, how can Canagrex pay to the farmers of New Brunswick under the terms of this Bill a profitable price for potatoes which are selling at a horrible loss? Yes, Canagrex might help siphon potatoes out of this country and into another market, but not at a profit, Mr. Speaker. I say do not mislead the potato farmers either of New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island into thinking that this is the crutch of profitability for them or for any other aspect of agriculture. That is a deceptive part of the Minister's statements as he has talked to farmers and of the propaganda of the Government as a whole.

I charge that this Minister has, by virtue of the power of the purse and the authority of the Ministry, frightened many people into outward support for this program. The PEI Potato Marketing Board unequivocally opposed the buy-sell clause in this structure when its representatives came to Ottawa. When they were questioned on their way out of Ottawa after having had meetings with departmental officials, they left very timidly and had no further comment. Why does the Minister exercise such power over agriculture in such a deceptive way?

[Translation]

Mrs. Éva Côté (Rimouski-Témiscouata): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I deeply regret that a bill as important as this, which the House should have adopted a long time ago, must be dealt with under such difficult circumstances, and that the special procedure of time allocation should be used so that Hon. Members will take a stand on this particular bill.

Mr. Speaker, Canada must give itself this export mechanism if it is to compete successfully with other world countries that are taking positive measures to develop their export markets for farm produce. In this respect, I should like to refer to part of a statement made last year by Mr. William Tenkins, a former dean of the Nova Scotia College of Agriculture, last year:

In the Atlantic provinces, the export of farm produce is like a war. It is every man for himself, a most elementary and almost chaotic marketing approach.

Mr. Speaker, I was amazed to hear an Hon. Member from the Maritimes speak the way he did following 86 hours of debate both in the House and in committee, after the Committee on Agriculture that I have the honour to chair sat for nearly four months, heard over thirty witnesses on this issue, including some noted representatives of the farming community. I could not believe my ears when I heard the Hon. Member question the credibility of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Also as recently as November 1982 the Canadian Federation of Agriculture submitted to us a document from which I quote:

The Canagrex issue is of serious concern to CFA. In our view, such an export corporation should have all the flexibility needed to promote Canadian exports, take the risks of joint partnership, provide specialized advice when required, carry out desirable or essential interstate negotiations, share in the risks and support of long-term expansion work, meet advertising needs, give guarantees and allow its employees to assume the responsibility, when need be, of actively exploring marketing prospects.

Mr. Speaker, looking back on what we have been going through here over the last three days, today everything is fine, we can at last deal with the issue at hand but yesterday and the day before every attempt was made to hinder discussion on the Canagrex legislation now before us. We wasted time, it is outrageous to have to admit that \$2 million were squandered that way. And I ask you in all honesty, Mr. Speaker, is it not your contention that Canadian farm producers would have preferred that the Canadian government spend those \$2 million on crop diversification, advertising promotion, as proposed by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, support to research and international trade missions to sell our Canadian farm products? As I see it, our image would have been better had we made better use of those tax dollars, instead of wasting two afternoons on questions of privilege on other matters totally irrelevant to the sad economic situation we are now facing. Life may be somewhat less difficult in Canada than elsewhere in this world.

We enjoy freedom here, thank God, and I hope this endures. But if we go on trampling freedom as we did for two days, preventing members of Parliament from speaking to the subject of interest to them and to our Canadian constituents, we are making a mockery of the democratic work of Parliament as accepted in a responsible society. I wonder how our people will judge us today. Freedom has been abused, and abusing freedom leads to anarchy. I have a feeling that for some time we have been going through a situation verging on anarchy, Mr. Speaker. I would like to refer again to the submission of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and I quote:

There is increasing co-operation and help between industry and governments throughout the world, as they strive for a larger share of the international market. Canada must follow suit.

Mr. Speaker, when the Federation makes such important statements, I have a feeling it is blaming us for lagging behind international realities. It is true that in Canada some groups with government assistance are better organized than others. Of course, big export corporations get all the services they need, but there is a group of agro-food products that are not sold or are undersold because perhaps they are not as well advertised or potential buyers are not as well informed of what we could offer them. The legislation we are now trying to discuss sensibly, and logically, will in no way hinder the work of organized export groups but would provide other groups with the opportunity to organize themselves better, and receive such services they are entitled to and which have been available to the others for quite some time. I see no reason why there should be a kind of emergency debate situation now, considering there has been such filibustering and not much rationality or Christmas spirit in our approach to this bill.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that farmers have always worked the land, long before the advent of radio, television and electronics. Have we reached a point where we must support