

*Canagrex*

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Telling what? Telling the truth?

**An Hon. Member:** Like jackasses.

**Mr. Blais:** Yes, perhaps. Maybe that is why they have to have their backsides refreshed from time to time.

I just hope that the philosophy which is being vented today by Hon. Members from the Tory Party who participated in the debate will be the views which will be advanced during the next federal election, because there is nothing that I would enjoy more than a repeat of the Petro-Canada debate. We know the exact result visited upon the Tories who were trying to defend their Government at the time of the 1980 election.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Huntington:** How many Liberals got elected in the West?

**Mr. Blais:** Having said that, it does not surprise me that the Minister of Agriculture has had a great deal of difficulty with Canagrex, because there has been a tendency on the part of the Conservative Opposition, the real Conservative Opposition, to react on most issues, as it is their wont, to react whenever there is an initiative taken to enhance our export capacity and capabilities.

**Mr. Huntington:** It's raw socialism and you know it, J.J., and you're all for it.

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, that has been endemic in the Tory Party since the national policy of John A. MacDonald. I would recommend to the hon. gentlemen opposite—

**Mr. Rossi:** Where are you going?

**Mr. Huntington:** Right here. I won't be very far away.

**Mr. Blais:**—and even to the hon. gentleman who is leaving his seat, to read a recent book entitled "Not for Export" by Professor Glen Williams of Carleton University, wherein he explains the Canadian attitude toward export. The attitude of Canada and Canadian producers has been to satisfy the domestic market. We have had this particular weakness of not wanting to enter into the international marketplace. Indeed, we have suffered substantially as a result of that in the food producing sector. In effect, we are in a deficit position. We tend to export our agricultural products in an unprocessed form or after very slight processing. That has been our tendency because we have basically wanted to satisfy our domestic market. That has been one reason why we have experienced some huge deficits in the recent past in terms of finished products and manufactured products.

• (1600)

In effect, the attitude of the Tory Party vis-à-vis Canagrex is exactly that. The arguments which they have advanced are inaccurate. There were two very important amendments to Bill C-85 made by the Government in the committee with the expressed purpose of alleviating any fears that the industry might have regarding this important piece of legislation.

The main issue was the buy and sell provision. It was felt that this new Canagrex corporation would somehow compete with the private sector. We said time and again that Canagrex would be there to complement the private sector activity, not to compete with it. We are trying to introduce Canagrex in order to enhance the ability of Canadian agricultural producers to produce by providing them with an additional market. Its purpose is not to get involved in competition with the private sector. At no time has there been any indication of wanting to involve it in the private sector.

I happen to know of what I speak because indeed I run the Canadian Commercial Corporation through the Export Supply Directorate. We do not compete with the private sector. We are in the international marketplace complementing the activities of the private sector. I have asked the private sector to identify one instance when we were competing with them in terms of exports. Not once has there been an indication of any competition. Quite to the contrary, we have enhanced the ability of the small business sector in Canada and the manufacturing sector to enter into the international marketplace to market their goods. As a matter of fact, last year we increased the exports by 34 per cent to make over one-half billion dollars in exports from Canadian manufacturers. It is that sort of organization that we envisage with Canagrex, not a corporation that competes with the private sector.

There is nothing in this Bill to indicate that this company will be competing with the private sector. It is not in the tradition of Crown corporations in Canada to compete with the private sector. Of course, there are some minor exceptions to that rule. But they were introduced as a result of the Canadian Government and the Canadian people feeling that perhaps their participation in certain sectors was not sufficient to ensure that the national interest is protected.

The provisions of this particular Bill do not allow Canagrex to get involved in the production of food products or own land for the purpose of farming. That is clearly set out in the Bill. It cannot produce or get involved in the production of food.

Necessary changes were made to ensure that Canagrex will only act at the request of or in coordination with organizations, corporations or individuals who wish to take advantage of the opportunities offered under this legislation. Canagrex is saying that it cannot go out into the marketplace unless it is asked to do so. I should know what the Minister is talking about because that is exactly how my operation functions. We cannot go into the marketplace unless we are requested to do so. Sometimes I feel that this is a restriction, but nevertheless it is a provision in the Bill.

In effect, those fears that are manifested by Members opposite when talking about dark conspiracies and about the creation of Crown corporations that will somehow dictate to farmers what they should be doing in the marketplace are completely false.

**Mr. Huntington:** Sheep, sheep.