

corporations. However, each change will have some impact, or a significant impact on people who are affected by the industry.

I ask the minister if he might consider taking a positive step which will lay to rest the concerns of a number of people in the private sector who see the Canagrex Corporation as a threat to businesses which are already in place. Will he allow them the opportunity to comment on the objectives of the government in power today? I think that that would be open government. It would give them the ability to respond in the event that the corporation damages their businesses.

A broader consideration here is the entire question of intrusion of government into the private sector, doing things that private enterprise cannot do. I would like to stand back for a minute and consider what is happening, not only in the agricultural area but also in a number of areas in government. I would like to consider whether, in view of the financial strains placed on governments across Canada and in many of the countries of the world today, it is right for governments to continue to move into the private sector. I do not think there is any question but that, in the broad range of matters, the government cannot do as good a job. I am saying that in a pragmatic way. I firmly believe it in a philosophical way. However, in a pragmatic way, governments cannot respond as quickly to changing market circumstances as those in the private sector who have their money on the line and will be hurt if they make a mistake. We have seen many such instances. I guess the CDC is a partial example of someone being hurt by a \$2.1 million loss. One hundred and twenty-four million dollars were lost resulting from the ineptness of a series of ministers and bureaucrats who were following this corporation for ten years, I believe. The government finally wrote the corporation off this year at a cost to the taxpayers of \$125 million. I asked the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Gray), who was responsible for that loss. I asked him about four or five times, in different ways. Each time he said he would not tell me. I said that that was fine, and that I would not ask him to name the names. But I did ask him whether he had asked who was responsible. Did the minister find out the names of the individuals who were responsible so that he could take action? I asked that question four times. Each time I got a waffling answer. Each time it became clearer and clearer that the minister had not asked who was responsible. That is why I say it is important in a broader sense that we avoid this intrusion of government into things the private sector should be doing.

● (1520)

Politicians, like the minister of industry and regional development and others, including myself, do not know enough about what is going on in the market in a particular area of activity as do those who earn their livelihood in that area.

I guess what is most important is the response when money is lost. The response of the minister of industry and regional development was the best example. He did not care about the money being lost. The only thing to go through his mind was how to sweep this one under the carpet without a lot of

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publicity and press activity. That was the main concern of that minister. That is the concern that I, not as a member of Parliament but as a taxpayer, have about my tax payments being spent in that way.

This bill must go to committee. There is no question that a lot of work must be done in committee to constrain the activities of that corporation.

My final point is on the impact of an organization like Canagrex on the consumer. Every consumer in this country is concerned about the high cost of food, the large bite that the cost of food takes from his or her budget compared to five or ten years ago.

I had the fortunate or unfortunate experience this past summer of doing some shopping for my wife. I bought some staples such as ketchup, margarine, and other such items which we were going to take with us on a family trip to the west. I did not buy anything substantial, but by the end of that shopping expedition I had spent \$162.50. I was floored. For years my wife had been telling me "I need more money for food. I need more money for food". I kept saying, "No, no, no". Now I understand. It is important that members of Parliament consider the impact on the housewife or the husband learning more of what housewives do.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Learning the trade.

Mr. Wilson: As my colleague says, learning the trade. What concerns me about this bill is the broad power to store food, to export and import it, as well as the control of the government over the whole food process, production, sale and marketing.

The minister is dedicated to extending supply management through a broad range of production in this country. When I look at the connection between that and this bill, I say to myself, the government can control supply. If it makes a mistake, it can put that supply, as I said earlier, in a silo in Brazil. We can import, we can export. The net result of this is a loss of competition in the whole food processing mechanism. While the immediate impact of that may be higher costs for the consumer, it will result in damage done to the production side of the industry as well.

If we lose the discipline of competition on the production side, we have a less effective, less productive sector in that part of our economy. For that reason if for no other, we should provide a very careful delineation between what Canagrex can do and what the private sector can do so that there is ample opportunity for competition in the food industry.

In conclusion, I do not think there is any question that this bill requires a lot of work in committee. We need exports of food and fewer imports of food into this country. The objective of this bill is very clear. I do not think anyone in this House could quarrel with that. However, we must be careful to ensure that the concerns I have expressed today are not embodied and fixed in the legislation in a way that they cannot be changed.

I again stress the importance of being careful to ensure the minister is not doing this just to be seen to be doing something