

Canagrex

Therefore I do not see why the Government is insisting on abolishing this agency. I feel that this is a case of negative discrimination. Probably it is because the farm lobby was not sufficiently organized around the senior ministers. Imagine! It was the Minister of Finance who announced the bad news, someone who, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, has never milked a cow in his life, who has no idea of what is going on, of what is happening in the agricultural sector. He had the gall to come up and tell farmers: Listen, we want nothing to do with Canagrex, we want nothing to do with you; take care of your own problems. That is exactly how the Government of Canada responded, and later on they said: We will transfer a few public servants here and there to take care of you. But the fact is that the old system was not working, which is why we created the Canagrex Corporation with a specific mandate for agricultural products.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this decision can be explained by the obsession of the Government with anything called a Crown corporation. Maybe our mistake was to call it a Crown corporation. Maybe if it had been a branch or whatever within a Department, they probably would have ignored this group of 70 public servants who were strictly dedicated to the promotion of Canadian products. We also have to remember that what we wanted to sell on foreign markets were competitively priced products. Canadian farmers are among the most productive in the world, and therefore there is no reason to be afraid of sending Canagrex sellers all over the world because they have a quality product, a product which is certainly made with state-of-the-art technology, and can be sold at a very competitive price. I am convinced that my colleague the Hon. Member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve (Mr. Desrosiers) does not understand why the Minister of Finance announced the abolition of Canagrex, because common sense tells us that first Canagrex recovered its costs and secondly, that it could have played a major role in Canadian trade policy. I think you have to be very shortsighted and to be obsessed by rhetoric to overlook the necessity and the validity of an agency like this one.

• (1650)

Mr. Speaker, I say that in a few months or in a few years, but that may be too far for the Government to look ahead because they will not be there any more, but I think that the next Liberal Government will have to correct once again the mistake made by this Government. I think that the next Government will absolutely have to re-establish an agency with a mandate similar to that of Canagrex. Consequently, the Conservative Government wastes four valuable years in a protectionist world where Canagrex agents could have gradually opened several markets, where they could have become legitimate in the Canadian agricultural sector, where they could have said for instance that there is an opening in this or that country for the hog sector, where they could have tried to open the Chinese market. Mr. Speaker, you know how long it takes, how difficult it is to penetrate a market like the Chinese market.

I am convinced that, had the Government not killed Canagrex in its infancy, the Agency would have done very well over the years. Slowly but surely it would have built contacts around the world, it would have shown Canadian products in international affairs and exhibitions to promote the *Made in Canada* label. They would have us believe that the officials in External Affairs are going to do the job. Now, Mr. Speaker, they have never done it since Confederation. Why do you think the Canadian Grain Commission was created? Why was the Canadian Dairy Commission forced to get involved with exports? Because External Affairs were not doing their job. I am pretty sure that the ones who want the abolition of Canagrex . . . I would like our Conservative colleagues to tell us whether they would trust diplomats from External Affairs when it comes to selling commodities for the Canadian Grain Commission. Do they have total confidence in that agency? I have great respect for External Affairs, but it is not their bag.

I hope that before the final vote, Mr. Speaker, and I know it is high time . . . The truth is, our colleagues should realize that it is essential for the expansion of the Canadian agriculture, for the development of new agricultural technologies and for the creation of jobs in the agri-business field. We have to develop our foreign markets, and we will not be able to do so by merely saying to two or three agencies: "Look after that in your spare time." I am very disappointed to see people like the Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Côté) or others in similar areas, not reacting, when their interests are the same as those of Liberal Members. Farmers from all regions and all political stripes have a vested interest in the survival of Canagrex and the expansion of its activities.

Therefore, before concluding, because I know that the time allotted to me is running out, I really regret very much that our colleagues opposite do not rise to underline again the necessity of Canagrex and that they in fact remain passive in spite of the designs of the Minister of Finance who has no idea whatsoever of what is going on in the agricultural world, who does not realize the impact of a corporation such as Canagrex in the agricultural sector nor does he have any concern about the importance of exportation markets for the development of several farming communities.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I must unfortunately . . . And you know that unfortunately they are 211. I must now come to the conclusion that if the members opposite are spineless, we will have during the next hours to mourn the passing of Canagrex. Mr. Speaker, it is surely a sad day for the Canadian agriculture and once again in a few years we will have to correct that fundamental mistake of the Government. When they meet the sad fate awaiting them in opinion polls, I hope Tory Members will remember the day they voted for the abolition of Canagrex. They have lost two or three more points, Mr. Speaker, and this is not the end.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, a question to my friend the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre). I agree with what he said about the abolition of Canagrex. It is important to keep