

Canagrex

my colleagues opposite, who are saying we do not need the Canagrex Bill, that everything it is meant to do can be done quite easily by the private sector and that this kind of corporation is useless.

Mr. Speaker, I am indeed surprised, especially since I know that representatives of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture have been asking very regularly about Bill C-85, in papers they send to us, in their own publications and in those published in Eastern Canada, particularly in Quebec, such as *Terre de Chez-Nous*, where they wonder what is happening to Bill C-85.

Mr. Speaker, last fall, in November, to be precise, we met with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and I know that the Federation was also supposed to meet Members of the Official Opposition, and, I imagine, Members of the New Democratic Party as well. The Federation, which is a national body, was anxious to see the Canagrex Bill passed and implemented to help promote and export our agricultural and food products. I am surprised to hear Members of the Official Opposition tell us that this is unnecessary. I am also surprised to hear that this might trigger a war between the West and the East. I am also surprised to see, considering the amendments that have been moved, that their official agricultural critic is not even in the House. I am also very surprised that now we have examined this Bill in committee, in terms of the various amendments, after motions had been moved to delay the proceedings, and so forth, that now they are telling us, after so many hours of debate, that there has not been sufficient debate on this issue. Mr. Speaker, I am astonished at this attitude, and I think that, in view of the Government's intention to see to it that this Corporation, which would have the power to facilitate and promote exports of agricultural products, meets with the approval of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canada has a duty to establish an export mechanism if it is to remain competitive with other countries that are taking concrete measures to extend their export markets for agricultural products. That is the kind of mechanism that is being urgently requested by our country's agricultural organizations.

Our competitors have already taken steps to increase their exports of agri-food products, and I am thinking of our neighbours to the South, the United States. The Americans have a number of organizations, including the Foreign Agriculture Service, the Co-operative Program, the Commodity Credit Corporation with its various credit programs such as Public Law 480, to improve their agri-food exports, which have already earned the U.S. over \$36 billion. As far as our agriculture is concerned, we are in a position to take a different approach, while helping to promote our products abroad, and with Canagrex, we shall be serving the interests of all Canadians and especially Canadian farmers.

• (1240)

This example shows what priority is given by countries such as the United States to the agri-food export trade. Motion No. 1 aims at removing the word "engage in". It seems to me that its move simply wants to dilute the provisions of the Bill. That is also the purpose of the other amendments being considered today, even though this Bill would effectively allow us to do as other countries have done by giving proper priority to our agricultural and food product export trade. Other countries have in fact already done this, including France, Denmark, Great Britain, Germany, Israel and Mexico, by setting up the required mechanisms to maximize the development of their export markets.

The powers conferred to farm product sales promotion agencies in the United States allow them to take a judicious and flexible approach aimed at increasing their export markets. Why should Canada, which is so close to the United States, not be able to take advantage of this situation and use the same type of system to export our agri-food products? Thanks to the agricultural policies applied by the Canadian government for the past several years, this sector of the economy has been very stable in spite of the present recession and must be further supported in order to develop. Why is this? Thanks to the various governments, to the people involved and to farm organizations, we have been able to stimulate production, increase our purchasing power and develop our export capacity. In my opinion, this is extremely important for Canadian agriculture, and indeed, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has recognized this fact and has asked that this Bill be promoted and passed.

Thus, the powers granted to farm product sales promotion agencies in other countries such as the United States provide for a judicious and flexible approach aimed at conquering export markets. It is also very interesting to note that the industry is trying to secure more powers.

In addition, many circles are in favour of a better co-ordination of activities and much pressure is brought to bear in order to have the Export Trading Act passed, which would provide for the creation of export trading companies similar to the Japanese giants which look after every aspect of the export trade. This is what we must do, Mr. Speaker, we must act.

In other words, Canada will have to face an increasingly stronger competition on the international markets and we must act now if we do not want to be left behind. Some people suggest that Canagrex will be different from agri-food export development programs now existing in other countries. Nothing can be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Our competitors do not compete with other sectors in their own country, but rather with other countries. They have set up agencies which promote sales to foreign buyers in order to maximize the sales of their products.