

have fired all of the staff and told the board that it no longer has a purpose or a function, but Canagrex is still in place, it is still the law of this country and it is important to remember that in terms of what I now have to say. That Act requires the Minister of Agriculture to do certain things upon the receipt of the annual report of the Canagrex Agency. I understand the board of directors had such a meeting on or about September 11. The final report was submitted to the Minister of Agriculture. What is so significant about that, Mr. Speaker? Canagrex had a new provision that was supposed to help provide better scrutiny and control by Parliament. The Canagrex Bill has a clause in it that requires the Minister of Agriculture to table the annual report within 15 sitting days of his receipt of the report. This is a very unusual clause, but it is in keeping with the move toward better parliamentary scrutiny of government agencies and Crown corporations. Once that report is tabled in the House, it is automatically referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I say this is important because the Minister has had that report in his hands far more than the necessary required 15 sitting days.

The Minister has had this report almost two months. He has yet to table the report in the House of Commons according to the law of the land, passed by this House of Commons, approved by the Senate and signed by the Governor General. The Minister has ignored the law. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, he has taken away the right of parliamentarians on the Standing Committee of Agriculture to review that final report, to call witnesses, members of Canagrex or the Minister himself to find out just what has been going on in the agency, what it did in the last few months of its operation and why the Minister decided to do away with it.

It is impossible for us to ask these questions because the Minister refuses to table the report as the Canagrex Act as the law of the land specifies.

Why is the Minister evading the law? It is not because he was not made aware of it. I wrote to him pointing out that he has this responsibility. The letter is dated October 3. I pointed out that he had had the information far in excess of the 15 days the law requires. I asked him to table the report so it could go to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. One of the Minister's assistants responded on October 22. The letter reads:

On behalf of the Honourable John Wise, this will acknowledge receipt of your letter of October 3, 1985 concerning Canagrex.

Please be assured that your letter will be brought to the Minister's attention at the earliest opportunity.

● (1250)

I am not sure whether the Minister's staff has brought it to his attention. However, I am bringing it to your attention, Mr. Speaker, and to the attention of the House. I think it is time the Minister acted. He has had far too long. The action is clear in the Bill. In order for parliamentarians to conduct their business, it is necessary that the Government adhere to its own laws, the laws of the country.

For that reason, we should carefully consider why we are debating this legislation at all, when the Government and some

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Ministers of the Crown are flouting the law, in terms of this particular law, at this moment. It makes a travesty not only of the parliamentary process but of our justice and legal system, when a Minister of the Crown ignores the laws of Canada in such a blatant fashion.

Mr. Sid Fraleigh (Lambton-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into this debate. I happen to enter it as a new Member, carrying no baggage for what I have said in the past. That may allow me to provide a little more common sense perspective than has been applied to it so far.

We should go back in history a little in order to have a full grasp on what is proposed in this particular Bill. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, we had a Minister of Agriculture who was running around the country telling the population that there were great and wondrous markets out there which were just waiting to be tapped, and that all we needed was some super agency which could deal state to state and take advantage of those markets. I assure the House that that is a myth. There are no markets out there which are just waiting to be taken up by putting together some type of agency. There is fierce competition in the world market in whatever commodity is involved.

As has been pointed out, the record of the agency in question over its life was one of minimal impact upon the Canadian agricultural industry. The Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) made mention of its total sales, but \$15 million of the \$16 million which he quoted was a credit arrangement with Cuba. Farm agencies were bending over backward to give this organization business so that it would become viable. In the end, they had to withdraw that business because of inaction.

I have been involved with a commodity group which was heavily involved in export marketing, not only to the United States, but to the Pacific Rim and to European markets. There is no golden panacea out there. It is hard work, and only hard work will produce results.

Our country has been pretty well served over the past. Prior to 1982, we had the old Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce which worked in conjunction with Agriculture Canada and, in my opinion, did a fairly commendable job. I am not suggesting for a minute that we do not need a strengthening of some of our foreign trade offices, particularly those in the Pacific Rim. However, by and large, we have had good support from the Government agencies which were in place. I have some concerns about the restructuring of the international trade which took place in 1982 under the former Government. I think a monster has been created in lumping together three responsibilities, particularly that of international trade, which deserve to be separated.

A question has been asked about the rationale for disbanding Canagrex. As someone deeply involved in exporting an agricultural product at the time Canagrex was in place, I assure the House that it did nothing for our industry. It was a duplication of a system which already had the wherewithal in