

Canagrex

second reading stage or, again, at third reading stage. Therefore, I would seek the co-operation of Hon. Members in adhering to practice in this respect.

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to discuss the amendments as proposed. I have already referred to the one which would ensure that Canagrex cannot become actively involved except in co-ordination with, or in co-operation with, an exporting organization, a company, a farm organization and so on.

Incidentally, I should point out that the official critic of the Official Opposition indicated that those amendments which we put forward as a Government at that time were acceptable to them, the Official Opposition. However, to remove those provisions would simply place Canagrex in the same position as a steer, perhaps, amid a bunch of heifers. It has to have that buy-sell provision if we are going to deal on a state to state basis with other countries, which are insisting on dealing this way because many of the products which are offered in the world markets are not of the quality which we want to see, and which we know we can produce.

In fact, when you look at the situation, particularly in the grain industry, various companies are allowed a 3 per cent tare. Quite often that tare percentage is added to the grain after it has been sold by the farmers. We want to ensure that the food products exported by Canagrex are top quality. We have the vehicle here to ensure long-term contracts, ensuring continuity of supply and a quality product. We have the vehicle in place to do this, but we need the bridge financing as provided for in the Canagrex legislation.

Many of our marketing boards would love to expand their production. It is that last 10 per cent of production which is the cheapest. Consequently, they can tie in to a long-term contractual arrangement with an offshore market. However, like the Canadian Wheat Board, which is able to sign up long-term contractual arrangements with other countries, we in the rest of Canada do not have that available to us. Consequently, it is absolutely essential that we have the buy-sell provision in the Canagrex legislation. To remove that, as has been suggested by the Opposition, would simply make Canagrex a vehicle to promote agriculture products with no real potential for tying up long-term contracts with other nations who so desperately need our food.

Another point is that we have provided for an audit in this legislation by the Auditor General, an audit which meets his criteria and one which is somewhat lacking in other Crown corporations. I would like to commend the Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party for bringing forward this amendment and for taking such an interest in the legislation as it came through committee. They certainly saw the need for this legislation. By providing that type of auditing procedure, we can be sure that the interests not only of the producer but of all of Canada, including the taxpayers, are represented.

I must point out also that in regard to the development of offshore markets with other nations, I have had it brought to my attention on various occasions that Canadians have not been aggressive enough in their sales to other countries except

for, perhaps, the Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian Dairy Commission. We have not had continuity of aggressiveness towards promoting our own products. The existing system would tend to indicate that on the many occasions where we do have a temporary surplus of a product in Canada, it is offered to world markets at fire sale prices. There is no incentive there for the farmers themselves to gear up and supply a market, if they know they are only going to be able to sell at a time when they have a temporary surplus on hand. Therefore, there is no way that we can give those countries our assurances that we will always have lots of product to supply their needs.

I firmly support this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to say that most of the major farm organizations in Ontario give us their unqualified support and are asking that this legislation be passed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Ron Stewart (Simcoe South): Mr. Speaker, again, it is a sad moment for me in this House to rise and have to speak against a Bill which has been put upon us by closure. Not only that, it is the most blatant move to enforce state control which we have seen in the House. It is another erosion of our rights and freedoms, this time directed at the farmer.

Many farmers would no doubt welcome assistance from the Government in defining and developing export markets, as some of these amendments state. I would like to speak particularly to Motion No. 1. The farmers would welcome help for research and development in the agricultural industry totally. Government assistance in this respect makes a great deal of sense. It would be a laudable and sound concept, and this Bill purports that this is its intent. However, you will note, Mr. Speaker, that I used the phrase "Government assistance". The reason that many farmers and farm organizations and related groups across the country are opposed to Canagrex is that the concept behind the Bill is not Government assistance. It is another direct move towards Government interference, pure state control of agriculture.

Mr. Taylor: Right on.

Mr. Stewart: In a meeting with two of my colleagues, many OFA representatives and county agricultural representatives, I am proud to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Garth Cubitt, the President of the Simcoe County Agricultural Association, had the foresight to understand what this is all about, that it is state control, and to oppose it.

There are many fears over this Bill, the majority of them justified, given the previous track record of this Government. There is valid concern that the Government will be in direct competition with private companies. There is worry that Canagrex will venture into unprofitable areas for political purposes. And how many times have we seen this happen? There have been predictions of higher food prices for Canadians once the Government gets involved.

The many specific concerns related to this Bill are in Clause 1, Mr. Speaker. They have already been dealt with in detail by my colleagues in committee, and you have just heard two fine speeches by the Hon. Member for Bruce-Grey (Mr. Gurbin)