

Canagrex Act

there an element of jealousy or a feeling that the Department of External Affairs or the trade commissioner service has not been doing its job properly? I think we deserve an explanation from the minister.

There is one other feature of this bill which deserves to be underlined and indeed I have underlined it very clearly in my copy of the bill. We must remember that Canagrex presumably means "Canadian agricultural exports".

The other suggestion I made was somewhat facetious. Export is its main purpose. That being so, I wonder why we should have the following provision in Clause 14(1)(g):

purchase, lease or otherwise acquire and hold real and personal property for actual use by Canagrex in the operation and management of its business and

Clause 14(1)(i) reads:

as additional security for any loan made or guarantee given under this act, take, hold and sell mortgages on real and personal property and any other security;

Is Canagrex going to take on the mortgages of farmers? Is it going to deal with real estate mortgages in the urban centres? Is it going to assume some of the mortgage lending needs of our supermarket areas? Why is it dealing in mortgages in this country when its purpose is to promote the export of agricultural products?

Clause 14(1)(j) reads:

acquire, by foreclosure or other proceedings or in any other manner, and hold any real and personal property mortgaged to Canagrex . . .

What is Canagrex getting involved in, Mr. Speaker? Is it the export of agricultural products or the demolition of some of Canada's farms? I think we are entitled to ask that question about these outrageous powers. I am entitled to ask but I am not sure I am going to get an answer. I hope the minister will get around to it.

Mr. Whelan: You will get a satisfactory answer if you give me time.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): That is one reason why I am underlining these particular features of the bill. I think they require some clarification so that those who may be affected or feel that they could be affected will present their objections or support at committee stage.

More than one speaker on this side of the House has mentioned the depressed state of our agricultural industry. I come from a rural and urban riding, Mr. Speaker. I should like to remind you that the name Saanich is an Indian name meaning rich soil. It could be related to the riding in the province of Quebec called Terrebonne or Terrerich. Saanich means rich soil, and when it was originally in the hands of the Indians it was a food-producing area. A lot of it is being black-topped now and some of it is being taken out of production, as the minister knows. From the smile on his face I think he was expecting this part of my speech.

The minister and his officials say that it has to be taken out of production because of the presence in some soil of a parasite known as the golden nematode.

Mr. Whelan: Out of production for certain products only.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): That is correct. Potatoes are a host crop and I believe tomatoes are also a host crop. The minister and his officials know a great deal more about the golden nematode than anyone else in Canada, I suppose. If it is as dangerous as the minister claims, perhaps he should organize a meeting of those people in the riding of Esquimalt-Saanich who are affected and explain the danger that he foresees. He could do that in a variety of ways. He could get in the jet and go out there. It is a great place to be at this time of year, particularly in view of the weather outside here tonight.

If he cannot go out there I suggest that he could use the conference call technique. This is a simple procedure and requires just a little bit of organization. There is an experimental station very near the area of the riding where the adulterated soil is. This station is very highly lauded by the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais).

● (1700)

The minister should organize in the experimental stations in Saanich a meeting during which he could talk with farmers. This would enable farmers to raise their questions, and he could explain exactly why this particular soil was removed from potato production. Also he could explain to them that he is attempting to organize some form of compensation, not for removing that soil from production for all time, but possible compensation for some of the machinery farmers have purchased for potato production, or assistance, if they require it, to purchase machinery for other products such as the crops which are being suggested by his officials. He could also explain the dangers which he and his officials foresee.

First, how dangerous is golden nematode? Is it as dangerous as some people maintain? Farmers in that riding say that there is no place in the world where it has been exterminated and that there are a number of places in the world where potatoes are still being grown in nematode-infected soil for export. If these stories are not correct, the minister has an obligation to explain it to them. If it is as dangerous as he insists, could he explain some of the consequences of golden nematode spreading in the immediate area or to the mainland? These are some of the matters which the minister should take up with farmers in that area by means of a conference call.

I have heard it said that if the soil reached the mainland, the agricultural area of the Lower Fraser Valley—and heaven forbid—there would be a danger that all motor traffic through the area to the American border would be stopped at the border and would either be disinfected or sterilized by some kind of steam treatment. This would be very harmful to the tourist industry of British Columbia and to the free movement of people back and forth across the border. Will the minister give an undertaking to explain these dangers, if they exist, to the farmers of the area by one means or another? He could explain them fully on a face-to-face basis or on a telephone-to-telephone basis; he could use some of the available modern techniques to do it. What about the movement of people from the two ferry terminals within the riding, the one to Anacortes from Sidney and the one from Swartz Bay to Tsawwassen