

*Canagrex Act*

agricultural products and food products or to provide managerial, technological, marketing or other counselling and consulting services to them;

enter into contracts with foreign governments to provide agricultural products and food products and services related to agriculture and food—

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

When we look at the terms of reference provided for the Canagrex Crown corporation in Bill C-85 we see that indeed the possibilities are endless, but they raise some concerns. I think it is important to say from the outset that Canagrex as proposed, and taken alone, will be of little help. When we look at the Canadian agricultural community, it is somewhat like an orchestra. It is comprised of a number of very important components, but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To improve only one part of the orchestra will do little for the over-all symphony. While the Minister of Agriculture appears to be taking some major and important steps with the formation of Canagrex, it must be seen within the over-all context of an agricultural strategy.

For example, alongside Canagrex it will be important to identify key sectors of the agricultural economic community. For example, what are the possibilities with fruits and berries, high-grade beef cuts, soya beans, grass seed, seed potatoes, maple syrup, select, frozen, dried or canned vegetables? It is important to target key areas of the agricultural sector of our economy to develop. What about transportation and storage facilities which must complement a sound and productive agricultural sector?

**Mrs. Mitchell:** What about market gardens and greenhouse operations?

**Mr. Riis:** Yes, the whole matter of market gardening and greenhouse operations. What about research and development into new strains of crop and new approaches to production? What about providing low interest, long-term capital loans for food producers, rather than leaving them at the mercy of a weekly change in interest rates which they presently face? What about the provision of techniques to provide price stabilization in order that those in the food production industry can make some long-term plans? What about land preservation policies where the federal government, provincial and municipal governments must work in co-operation to ensure that the best agricultural land in Canada remains for agriculture? What about the possibility of improved domestic processing? Surely these are all components of an agricultural strategy that must be brought into place to complement such a corporation as Canagrex?

● (1550)

I have concerns about the 11-member board of directors. Surely when we look at the creation and formation of Crown corporations today we see that some work exceptionally well and some do not work that well at all. As a matter of fact, I do not suppose it would be difficult for many of us to identify a Crown corporation about which we are less than enthusiastic in terms of its productivity and in terms of its service level.

One of the reasons for the best or better Crown corporations is the kind of board of directors assigned to it. I hope that Canagrex does not have a board of political hacks appointed to it primarily from the Liberal Party. I hope too that Canagrex will not be staffed with a group of burnt-out civil servants, people who have lost their enthusiasm, their drive and their commitment to the Crown corporation.

We in the New Democratic Party are also concerned about the level of funding which this new Crown corporation will receive. The amount is \$4 million. But by the time you set up your main office, pay your directors and set up the chief executive officers, there will not be much of a budget left to make a significant dint into providing the valuable service that is promised.

I support what the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) said a few days ago when speaking about the board of directors of Canagrex. He suggested we ought to amend Clause 3 in order to guarantee that people on the board of directors are people with practical experience in the field of agriculture, that they are people with expertise, with commitment and creative energy that will ensure the success of this Crown corporation.

One of the elements that will be required if Canagrex is to be successful is that it must promote a co-operative model between a variety of groups and levels of governments. That type of thing has not been witnessed for many years. It is imperative that Canagrex encourage co-operation between private firms, provincial governments, local governments and indeed, the federal government.

If we look at the track record of this particular government when it comes to co-operation, we are reminded of the lack of co-operation that existed when the Constitution was being discussed for months and months on end; and the element of confrontation that existed between levels of government. We are reminded of the way the VIA Rail cutbacks were introduced, how the community service financing was financed, and now the federal-provincial fiscal agreements discussions that are going on, and we see anything but an element of co-operation in those relationships. But when you consider what Canagrex will have to do to succeed and the incredible job it will have pulling together so many individual groups in a harmonious way, you realize it will be nothing short of amazing. It will require a change of mood and heart from those opposite. For example, here are a number of groups who will have to be active participants alongside Canagrex: the Canadian Wheat Board, the Canadian Dairy Commission; CIDA; the Federal Business Development Bank; the Farm Credit Corporation; EDC; External Affairs; Agriculture Canada; the chartered banks; other financial institutions; credit unions; co-operatives; the various trade offices; commercial advisers and embassies; and various government marketing agencies and private marketing agencies. The list could go on and on.

We hear from the B.C. Tree Fruit Marketing Board that it has a concern that Canagrex will not serve it well. The B.C. Tree Fruit Marketing Board has successfully developed export markets around the world. That board wonders what Canagrex