

Canagrex

The Prime Minister has himself identified the crucial issue, that is our ability to supply internationally competitive priced products. The Government proposal for CANAGREX does not address this question.

When the Government, in the words of the Prime Minister, says we must "fight to keep the deficit in check", the above mentioned Associations believe that the Government then should not be committing public funds to an initiative of which the *raison d'être* is so much in doubt. It must revise its position.

The Government has not relented nor has it revised its position in spite of some of the so-called amendments that the Minister of Agriculture has put forward. Those amendments are inconsequential.

For the sake of cooperation, so crucial to our agricultural export success, we would find it specially deplorable if the Government should choose to force this legislation through Parliament by means of the most drastic parliamentary measures. Because of the obvious serious opposition to CANAGREX by a very large proportion of those in Canada who would be affected by it, we urge the Government once again to recognize that the proposal is not adequately supported and to seek the means to achieve consensus through consultation along the lines advocated by the Prime Minister in recent public statements.

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has departed from that policy. I see that you are about to rise, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my views, and I do hope that the Minister of Agriculture will give this matter a second thought.

Mr. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate at the report stage of Bill C-85, the Canagrex Bill, because I am one of the first to recognize that we do not have, particularly in eastern Canada, the marketing mechanisms necessary to expand our export trade such as those in western Canada who are under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board.

I should point out, however, that when this Bill was in committee, amendments were made to it to ensure that Canagrex could never get involved in food production. This in fact would squelch the unwarranted rumours circulated by Members of the Opposition who use this as a point of contention.

In addition to that, there have been amendments made so that Canagrex could not get involved in exporting except in coordination with, or at the request of, producers' groups, processors, manufacturers or individuals. I would like to point out that by looking at last year's exports of agricultural products and taking into consideration that in 1982 the exports of wheat went up by 15 per cent over 1981 and other agricultural products only went up by 2 per cent, that alone tells us that something is sadly lacking in the export of agricultural products from within Canada.

I must take issue with Members of the Official Opposition opposite who would deny Canadian farmers the right to have a voice in the exporting of their products entering world trade. I simply cannot believe that Members of the Official Opposition can suggest that the farmers do not have the knowledge or expertise necessary to work with processors in order to further their own potential as members of an exporting nation. They do have this knowledge and expertise, and to suggest otherwise, as does the Official Opposition, is certainly an insult to the intelligence of farmers across Canada.

I also must take issue with Members of the Official Opposition when they talk about Canagrex being another move toward socialism. Look at the list of Crown corporations within the Province of Alberta. The Government of Alberta owns half of the land, it owns the mineral rights, and it does not allow an individual to own his own mineral rights as is allowed in Ontario. The Government is directly involved in trust companies and various other areas, and the Government is directly involved in the exporting of agricultural products. I think that what we are asking for here, Mr. Speaker, will ensure that all farmers in Canada have the same vehicles available to them to expand their production and sell on the world markets as enjoyed by the farmers in western Canada.

Officials of one of the most productive counties in Ontario wrote to their Member of Parliament, a Member of the Official Opposition, and their letter ended by saying:

Sir—however you fell you must vote, when the vote comes, the farmers of Oxford want Canagrex and we want it now! No more fooling around.

That is laying the issue right on the table, Mr. Speaker, and I think we must ensure that this is the route we take. Particularly with the low prices being experienced on the commodity markets at the present time, Canagrex can serve as a vehicle to bring into focus the potential that there is in Canada's export markets and fill those markets.

Farmers from Ontario, from all of eastern Canada, from western Canada and all farmers who wish to become involved, members of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, members from the National Farmers' Union, from various organizations, from the Ontario Tobacco Board, all support this legislation. In fact, the Ontario Tobacco Board lost a major sale recently because the legislation was not in place. The Horticulture Council, which spreads all the way from British Columbia through to the Maritimes, supports Canagrex and recognizes the need for it. These are all representative farm organizations across Canada whose members want to expand and utilize the potential that they have, a potential that has been bestowed upon them by Mother Nature and is not being utilized to its fullest capacity.

Only a small group within the agricultural sector is opposed to Canagrex. The vast majority of the groups are in favour of it.

• (1140)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member. The Chair has listened attentively to the Hon. Member who now has the floor, and to previous speakers as well. I would like to indicate to the House that we are now at report stage. Remarks must be relevant to the subject matter at hand. We are, of course, at the stage of discussing proposed amendments, a grouping of a number of amendments, and I would invite all Hon. Members to relate their remarks to the amendments as they have been grouped. Report stage, if I may be permitted, is not an occasion to discuss the general principle of the Bill. This is usually done at