

Government Orders

Meadow Lake—Canada Post Corporation—Remarks of constituents—Minister's position/Public relations activities.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mulroney that Bill C-29, an act to establish the Department of Forestry, to amend the Forestry Development and Research Act and to make related amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to be able to speak on Bill C-29 as my party's forest critic, and to speak today about forest issues as they affect this particular bill, and our country. Also, I would like to be able to make some comments on forestry and, perhaps, being from what many of us from British Columbia talk about as the number one forest province, and also being from the area of that province that I represent, the Prince George area, the riding of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

It is an honour to be here today and to speak on this bill because, as all members of this House know, it has been a long time coming. I intend to make some specific references to the bill and then to make general comments on some of the forest issues that I believe we are facing today.

I think it is important for all of us who are debating the issues today, such as the goods and services tax—the grief and suffering tax—to note its impact on forestry.

• (1620)

When we go to our ridings, those of us who are in the chamber today who are lucky to be members of Parliament and to have this platform to speak about important issues in our country, what is the issue that we face and talk about all the time? I venture to suggest that forestry, if not the first issue, as well as the demands on the resource, is certainly the second or third issue that

commands the time of members of Parliament in our ridings and in our discussions with our constituents.

While we are supporting support this bill at second reading, I am pleased that there is a good contingent of New Democrat members who will be speaking on this bill. Members of our party represent many of the over 300 communities that depend solely on the forest industry for their survival. I think it is good to speak of our caucus in the sense that we will be presenting a number of speakers on this particular issue. While not all members of the public are with us today, some are watching on TV at home. In our communities people are paying attention to what forestry means at the national level. We want to take that message to Canadians.

I said at the outset that this has been a long time coming. Indeed it has. It was first promised by the Conservatives in the 1984 federal election. Of course, prior to that the the Canadian Forestry Service acted under a number of different departments, primarily agriculture and environment. The minister said that as an early framework we can do more. We will be tabling amendments in committee that will strengthen the mandate of this bill.

We have waited, Mr. Speaker. Some members have been here longer than I. Some time before 1984 there was debate about such a bill. In fact, in the August 30, 1984 issue of the *The Prince George Citizen* the member who is now the Minister of State for Forestry is quoted as saying: "There is no doubt there will be a department of forestry immediately". I do not know the Tory definition of "immediately" but we have learned that it must be about five years in the Tory sense.

While this bill is here today and we are pleased with that, we want to not only speed things along, but add to that as well. Reasoned debate does not mean delay. Reasoned debate and suggestions to improve this bill will we hope improve the process and the federal mandate in forestry.

We are concerned, of course, because now in our country and all across the world forestry is perhaps the number one environmental concern. If there is an issue, department of government or resource that should be considered along the framework of sustainable development, it must be this department and this industry. Forestry is critical to our environment and the lives and jobs of the many people who depend on it for their future.