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when I see the Government patronizing in debate and doing nothing more than allowing a debate to take place. I have constituents who are concerned about the ongoing situation in the forest sector and the extent to which the forest industry can prosper and continue through the next 30 to 40 years. We agonize over the lack of regeneration activities in years past. In light of these facts, I expect far more from the Government than we have had tonight or up to this point. I trust that the Prime Minister is thinking about these things and considering the advisability of establishing a full-fledged Ministry of Forests as in the days of John Diefenbaker, which could meet the enormous challenges that face us in this primary industry.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to lay these matters out before the House and my constituents.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, let me begin my participation in this emergency debate on the forest fires by underlining a statement by the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Andre), that forest fires are a national problem. I think that should be the focus and purpose of this debate. We can use the situation that has evolved in Atlantic Canada to point out to all Canadians that forest fires are a national problem and it is appropriate to debate that matter in this national forum.

My socialist friend from the New Democratic Party made reference to the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker. I should hark back to his words that when one is on the trail of big game one should not be influenced by rabbit tracks. For a Party that has a monopoly on patronizing attitudes, let me condemn the Member for patronizing those from Atlantic Canada who would bring forth to this national forum a matter of grave and great importance to their communities across Atlantic Canada and one which affects the whole nation. For him to suggest that a number of Members here are not able to project that great interest and to ensure that their projection of that interest will achieve some national attention is an insult of which only a socialist from the New Democratic Party is capable.

Having disposed of those who follow rabbit tracks when there is a national interest, a national goal and a national subject to be pursued, let me begin by giving full credit to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett), who took the personal initiative to bring this matter to this national forum.

Last Thursday, on returning to my constituency of Halifax West, I had the opportunity, as I do on a weekly basis, to fly over the Province of New Brunswick. As I was travelling at some 30,000 feet, I saw below, from the jet on which I was travelling, what appeared to be a plume of smoke and a fire which, from that distance, did not appear to be of great concern. However, as we travelled across the Province of New Brunswick there appeared to be several plumes of smoke with apparent fires. When I arrived home at Halifax I received the news that a catastrophe was taking place in the Province of New Brunswick and that almost one year's production of

timber lands was being destroyed. I am sure that my colleague from Fundy—Royal reacted in the same manner as any of us hopefully would in that situation and asked what could be done about the matter. What my colleague did at the first opportunity was to bring the matter of the situation in New Brunswick and across Atlantic Canada to national attention through this political forum which allows us to consider the devastation which has been wreaked in Atlantic Canada in the light of the whole problem of forest fires and, hopefully, to seek new ideas and solutions to remedy what has been our failures in the past. I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal for giving the opportunity to Members of Parliament to involve themselves in this debate in the hope it will accomplish some good.

● (2240)

My second point is to examine not only in the national context, but in the world context, the importance of the forest industry to Canada and particularly to the Atlantic regions. I had occasion to read an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* which focused attention on the world problem in relation to the preservation of the forest resource. It pointed to a survey by the World Bank which resulted in a determination that at current rates of exploitation, the world forest cover will be reduced by 50 per cent by the year 2000. The Science Council of Canada has done a survey to indicate the dire situation which exists in Canada with respect to the preservation and enhancement of our forest industry. So we do not have any doubts in our minds that the forest industry involves a resource we have to protect with immediate and important action not only in Canada but throughout the world.

In Canadian terms, the forest industry is one of our most important industries. It accounts nationally for over \$13 billion in exports. It employs approximately 300,000 persons and involves the employment of another 600,000 persons. One out of 10 Canadians is affected in terms of employment by the national forest industry. It is interesting to note that the same statistic is reflected in the Province of Nova Scotia where 12,000 Nova Scotians are directly employed in the forest industry and another 18,000 are involved in occupations affected by the forest industry. Again, almost one out of 10 employed Nova Scotians has an interest in terms of employment in the forest industry. So we do not have to underline the importance of the industry to the Atlantic regions, to Canada and, indeed, to the world.

I would like to examine very briefly, because other Hon. Members have touched on this subject, the steps being taken to advance the interests of the forest industry nationally in Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces. One of the first steps taken by the Government of Canada was to establish a separate Ministry of Forestry. I have heard Hon. Members comment that this is not a sufficient step, that there ought to be a separate Department to deal with the forest industry. But as one astronaut said: "One small step at a time". The Government under the Right Hon. Prime Minister took this step to establish a separate Ministry for Canada's forest