

Employment

employed in wood-converting industries, between 105,000 and 115,000, or almost one third, have either been laid off or are involved in programs under which the unions have agreed to share the work among members rather than cash in on some of the unemployment insurance programs. The minister likes to take credit for the work-sharing program, but it is really a sharing of poverty and misery. I give credit to the companies and unions which were able to negotiate deals whereby workers share the available work. Some work two days per week others work three days per week, and in so doing they stay off the unemployment insurance roll.

I should like to break down the statistics I have just mentioned with respect to total unemployment in the forest sector. As I said, there are 300,000 people directly involved in the forest industry. Roughly 40 per cent of its total industrial capacity is located in the maritimes, Ontario and Quebec. The industry is operating at 57 per cent below normal. I would calculate from that percentage that roughly 68,000 people are laid off in the maritime provinces and in the Quebec and Ontario regions. The prairies, including the province of Alberta, share roughly 10 per cent of the industrial capacity of the forest sector. They are working at roughly 32 per cent capacity, which means that approximately 9,000 people are out of work. In British Columbia the problem is much more dramatic because the province produces 50 per cent of our wood products. There are about 150,000 people directly employed in the British Columbia forest industry. Close to the end of January that industry was operating at 75 per cent capacity. This means that approximately 37,500 people are laid off or are involved in some work-sharing program.

Of course, these figures do not include the industrial sectors which service the forest industry. It is said that up to 700,000 Canadians indirectly rely on wood-converting industries for their livelihood. If one projects these figures throughout the industry, one arrives at the staggering number of 380,000 people who are presently in some way affected, either laid off or operating in reduced circumstances. This is very dramatic, particularly since the industry reported to me that, at least in the short term, there will likely be a worsening of the situation. As we all know, interest rates in the United States are turning around and rising. Canadian interest rates are sure to follow because the government is totally devoid of any new ideas. We will see our interest rates following those of the United States. This is bad news for the lumber and construction industries. Even the most optimistic estimates for 1982 indicate that we should not expect a turnaround until late in the second or third quarter of the year. Of course this means that lay-offs will continue to accelerate and the statistics will be even more devastating by spring. The potential is real and in the short term it is disastrous.

Unfortunately there is very little the government can do now in terms of direct intervention. The industry is not one which lends itself to becoming involved in a partnership with the government such as other industries do. A patchwork solution would be to supplement the wages of workers who have enrolled in work-sharing programs with some unemployment

insurance benefits. It would be a band-aid solution, a patchwork program, but nevertheless it might save the unemployment insurance fund more money. At least it would allow people to keep their jobs, do some work and remain in their communities so that when the turnaround comes—and of course there is a pent-up demand—they would be ready to return to work. Of course we know that there are hundreds of small one-industry communities throughout the country in the forest industry. It would allow people to remain in those communities, to be ready to return to work and to take part in the future of their industry which indeed is bright.

In talking with the forecasters I was told that the world demand for wood products would increase dramatically, in fact by 50 per cent to 60 per cent, over the next 20 years. In the next 60 years it is expected that the demand for wood products throughout the world will triple. Canada should capture a lion's share of the new markets and fill these demands. The world supply of wood fibres is in a very precarious situation. We read in the newspapers every day that while we have neglected our forest base, other countries are doing even a worse job, particularly in the south, and that Canada will be looked upon as a major supplier of future requirements in wood fibres. The government's forest strategy committee predicts a doubling of our output of forest products by the year 2000. To achieve this we will have to cut 50 per cent more trees by that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Dubois (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, the subject of our debate today is extremely important to Canadians of all groups and ages across Canada. The government realized this some time ago, and after it was returned to power, it proposed a number of measures to create jobs, using various formulas such as community development projects, to name only one. There have been other measures aimed at providing better training and especially practical training for all Canadian workers. In fact, it is this particular aspect of the employment situation which I would like to discuss in the House. First of all, I may remind my hon. colleagues that a few weeks ago, at the federal-provincial conference in Vancouver, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) introduced a national training program designed to meet the requirements of this decade, which was very well received by the Canadian people. Incidentally, it is high time that Canadians became aware that the federal government spends about \$860 million annually on manpower training.

It is also clear, as the Minister of Employment and Immigration very appropriately stressed, that we shall have to change our teaching methods without delay and start to offer courses that are better adapted to filling our manpower requirements, especially in areas requiring very specialized