

Supply

2. convening a conference at the earliest opportunity of responsible Federal and Provincial Ministers to address the challenges presently facing the forestry sector.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter this debate. Before putting a bit of factual material on the record, I would like to spend a few moments touching upon what the Minister responsible for Forestry had to say. The motion before the House is really quite simple and one would have hoped it would have been supportable by the Government. It is designed to set up a new Ministry under a senior Cabinet Minister and set a date for a First Ministers' conference to deal in a much more serious way with the plight of the forest industry in Canada. It is interesting that the two Liberals other than the Minister who spoke, the Hon. Member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Irwin) and the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) supported these two ideas. It seems the Minister has left himself somewhat out on a limb in that he seems to be the only one speaking in this debate today who is opposed to this very sensible idea.

The reasons the Minister put on the record for saying no to this proposal seem to me to be highly simplistic. He says there are no facts to support a separate Ministry, but I am going to add a few further facts to those already put on the record today by those who support the idea. The Minister went on to say that the major thing done in the three years this Government has been in power is that regional economic expansion programs have been placed under the umbrella of the Canadian Forestry Service and Environment Canada, and the \$34 million has been put into a fund to top up the UIC. Well, that is the Liberal response to the largest single industry in Canada, certainly the most important in balance of trade, employment, and an industry which is now in dire trouble.

I think a few of the facts I am going to put on record today will make clear why Canadians across this country, certainly in the 300 main forestry communities, are alarmed that the federal Government is doing nothing really to help in reforestation or finding new markets, new technology and so on.

As I think most Members know, the Science Council of Canada came out with an extensive report just over a month ago. I would like to put some of that on the record because I think it is important that the Minister finds the time, since he could not be in the House today for this important debate, to sift through a few facts one night while he is mulling over the need for a Minister for forestry. I quote:

On a world scale, Canada has more than 10 percent of the world's forest resources. The total area of Canada is 9.9 million Km². Over 40 percent of our land area is in forests which cover more than 4.4 million Km² and contain a wood volume of about 23 billion cubic metres. About one-half is commercially productive forest land with the balance having some tree cover but not capable of sustaining significant annual wood volume production.

About 10 percent of Canada's land area, 4 percent of Canada's forest land, and 19 percent of Canada's productive forest lands are found in British Columbia. The most productive forests are also located in British Columbia as evidenced by the fact that the Province has more than 40 percent of the total wood volume in the nation.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF OUR FORESTS

Canada's forests generate an industry worth \$23 billion. It has more economic impact in terms of our country's trade balance than agriculture, mining, fishing and fuels combined. More than 300 communities, many in British Columbia, are solely dependent upon the forest for their existence and provision of a high standard of living for their residents.

In excess of 10 percent of the nation's employment, more than 1,000,000 jobs, is generated by forests and forest manufacturing. In British Columbia, more than 100,000 people, second only to the retail trade sector, are directly employed by the forest industry. Approximately 40 percent of the wealth of B.C. is generated through forest-based activities.

Mr. Speaker, those first few statistics should reveal to the Government side the need to have someone senior on the front benches dealing with forestry matters. We have Ministers of State for almost everything imaginable, lotteries, you name it. But for Canada's largest, most important industry we have no one effectively speaking for forestry from the Government side. The Science Council of Canada articulated a few of today's problems, which I think is also worth having on the record for Hon. Members to mull over, and I quote:

● (1640)

The forests of Canada are renewable but *not* without a degree of reinvestment of the wealth they create. Government and the public have perceived the forests of Canada as an endless resource that requires little attention to maintain productivity after harvesting. More than 800,000 hectares are harvested annually in our country but less than 25 percent are planted or seeded. The Canadian Forestry Service estimates that 25 to 50 percent of the area harvested annually fails to regenerate or reverts to non-commercial weeds. Losses due to fire, insects, disease and wind are equal to two-thirds of the annual harvest, more than 90 million cubic metres annually. This waste of productive land lying idle is a national shame and will result in serious consequences for the future and our nation's ability to employ its citizens. The results will affect all sectors of our society. The costs of dealing with the problems increase annually and will not be solved by short-term, single-program solutions.

The situation in British Columbia is somewhat better than the rest of the country but only marginally. Less than half of the forest area cut annually is replanted. The balance can be left for natural regeneration but still requires some degree of assessment or treatment to prepare for a new crop. More than 1,000,000 hectares need reforestation and B.C. is adding 20,000 to 50,000 hectares annually to the situation. Recent B.C. Ministry of Forests budget cuts will increase the problems.

I believe the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters has really hit the nail on the head. In British Columbia now we have a Social Credit Government which is interested in cuts. At the same time it is allowing forestry companies to take the profits which they have made historically from the forest industry to Indonesia, to Brazil, offshore or wherever. However, the industry is as culpable as are those right wing Governments which refuse to put money back into making sure we have good quality forests for future generations to reap.

The recommendations, Mr. Speaker, are of particular importance and I am only going to put two of them on the record. However, I believe they are particularly important because the foresters call them "Political Impediments to Forest Management". Point four, I believe, is worth mentioning, and I quote:

High technology, political fascination with high profile projects such as jet planes, nuclear reactors and electronics are viewed by many as the prime economic motivators for job creation in the future. We believe that the forests of our nation suffer from our efforts being applied to areas that do not result in