

Softwood Lumber Products

intervention of the Hon. Member, following a long and exhaustive examination of similar charges in 1982, Congress determined that provincial stumpage did not confer a subsidy on Canadian lumber producers. There were three principal reasons given and documented. They were legal and ironclad, and the situation has not changed. The Government has acknowledged time and time again that the situation has not changed. Having enumerated all those reasons they said that under any test there is no government assumption of costs. The situation remains the same. There was no subsidy, the case was won, and indeed the Americans capitulated. Nothing has changed. The precedents were there. The field was wide open.

The Minister had the ball and what did she do? On September 30, 1986, she offers to settle the issue. She says we are not guilty, there is no subsidy, but we will settle. Press reports of the day indicate that settlement was in the order of 10 per cent. Why did she do it? Why would anyone do it? Why would anyone ignore the precedent of 1983 and the strong arguments which are confirmed in the document to which I have just referred? What happened, of course, when she made that offer, is that the U.S. industry quite understandably tasted blood. She, with this generous gesture, said to the U.S. competition and the world that indeed Canada was subsidizing its lumber industry. That was not the case but she said it. I ask you, faced with a 10 per cent offer, how else could that be interpreted by the U.S. industry or any objective observer looking at the relationship between our industry and that of the U.S.? So she fumbled the ball right into the hands of the U.S. competition.

I think you, Mr. Speaker, were in that famous Grey Cup game in 1954 when Chuck Hunsinger was running around the left end. He had a pitch-out from Sam Etcheverry and he dropped the ball for no apparent reason. It is a mystery to this day. Jackie Parker picked it up and ran for a touchdown. That is exactly what the American competition did. Our Minister is the contemporary version of Chuck Hunsinger, but the consequences are a lot more serious than a Grey Cup, even though I know how much you cherished that victory.

If anyone in the U.S. blinked, as the Minister alleged they blinked, it was out of disbelief. They blinked the way you blink when you are playing a slot machine and hit the jackpot. Sure, you blink. When you win a lottery, you blink. If anyone blinked, that is why they blinked.

What happened subsequently—damage control? Will it end? Yesterday's exercise of inviting the Vice-President to Ottawa is clearly an exercise in some kind of damage control. It was terribly unsuccessful. Thinking of my own Leader's speech when he drew an analogy to Waterloo, it seemed to me that Vice-President Bush, in coming to Ottawa yesterday, was very much like Wellington paying a courtesy call on Napoleon after Waterloo. Of course, Napoleon would probably have given him a tongue-lashing as well.

• (1330)

Are you indicating that my time is up, Mr. Speaker? I have not yet come to the substance of my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes. In fact, I enjoyed the Hon. Member's speech so well that I gave him an extra 30 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity you are giving me to express my views on this Bill concerning softwood lumber products.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I had not expected to take the floor because I was quite convinced that, given the support of the largest Canadian labour union and of all provincial Governments in Canada, except Ontario, as well as the excellent explanations provided by our Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney), it was more than enough to make Canadians appreciate what the softwood lumber agreement entails.

However, Mr. Speaker, after listening to the debate, especially the comments of Members of the Opposition, I can see that a group of people still do not understand and would much rather deal in petty politics. These people would much rather discredit the federal Government, the Progressive Conservative Government, as well as nine provincial administrations. This is what they are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, and when we listen to someone like the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) we realize just how arrogant the Liberals were during their last mandate and over the past twenty years. They simply did not listen and consult, they never came to the defence of the provinces because their own interests had priority.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was in the House working quietly on some of my files when I noticed that the Hon. Member for Richmond—Wolfe (Mr. Tardif) was seeking the floor. I thought he would be making interesting remarks but, as he was speaking, I realized he had made a few mistaken statements.

His worst mistake was when he said that the whole forestry question was strictly a provincial matter.

Mr. Speaker, I said to myself, either the Hon. Member intended to mislead the House, which I doubt, since he always said he was sincere, or he did not know the facts. I made enquiries and realized that he did not know the facts and that he had an extremely short memory, because in 1980, at the beginning of the election campaign, the Liberals, and I am not naming any names, promised they would spend \$130 million annually on reforestation research, to stimulate further development of Canada's forestry industry. Mr. Speaker, there are 300,000 workers involved, according to their figures, and that is what they promised at election time.