

## S.O. 29

Province of Saskatchewan to Atlantic Canada to ensure equipment would be available.

Surely here is an opportunity for the Government to do more than just join in a debate on this. It is an opportunity for private Members, particularly from Atlantic Canada, to express their concerns about these problems and to do something in the way of taking action that will ensure when the problem arises again that Canada will be better equipped to deal with it.

The reality is that fires will occur, and unseasonably dry and hot weather makes the danger all the greater. The vast majority of forest fires have natural causes, and they will occur. They will occur in areas far removed from human habitation. Given that kind of challenge what we need is equipment.

In northern Ontario, of course, as in the Province of Quebec, we can go back to the 1920s to discover that the history of Canadian civil aviation finds a significant place for the use of aircraft in both scouting for fires and in fighting them. That underscores the argument my friend from Skeena, our spokesman for forestry, was making in saying that the Government should play a leading role.

I think too of the terrible fires that ravaged British Columbia forests last summer which became worse because the provincial Government, in a short-sighted move to save money, cut back on expenditures and disposed of firefighting equipment. People found themselves in the interior of the province, in the East Kootenay region without the equipment that was required to fight fires as they spread.

It is imperative that even in the midst of our attempts to reduce the deficit, to try to get control on government spending, as the Conservative Members here would surely say, it is imperative to realize that we have to have equipment at hand. We must remain in battle-ready condition so that we can deal with the challenge of forest fires when they occur.

● (2230)

While private Members have made good speeches tonight, Ministers have not addressed these matters and come to grips with the problem. I challenge the Government to ensure that in its pursuit of deficit reduction it does not sacrifice the future of the forests by not taking a leadership role.

Members have already indicated this evening that there is a need to maintain forests and develop forestry in Canada. Of course, this calls for a full-fledged Ministry and I, along with others, can only regret intensely that the Government has failed to establish such a Ministry. While there is a Minister of State for Forests, there is no full-fledged Ministry of Forests and I think it is incomprehensible that the Government has chosen this route.

It seems ironic that the Diefenbaker Government recognized the importance of forestry by creating a full-fledged Ministry. As years passed, the Liberals cut back on that Ministry until it eventually disappeared and offices were established within the

Department of the Environment as it was and is presently within the Department of Agriculture.

This is an important industry. The federal Government has a significant number of employees in this sector along with a substantial responsibility for it. One need only look at the activities of the Canadian Forestry Service at its various stations across the country to realize that the federal Government is involved in various areas of forestry, including research and support for regeneration activities in northwestern Ontario and other parts of Canada. The federal Government is concerned about these matters and recognizes this as an important industry.

The export of forest products is one of the most important industries in Canada and is surely no less important than agriculture for which there is a full-fledged Minister and another Minister of State responsible for the Wheat Board. Surely forestry is no less important than the fishery which has a full-fledged Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. This country requires a full-fledged Department of Forests with the authority it has in Government to ensure that this classic industry of renewable resources can provide employment for thousands of people across the country. This is an industry which can maintain medium and small communities all across the country. Surely it is of enough importance to have a full-fledged Ministry.

We were pleased that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was here for about an hour and graced this debate with his presence. We would have liked to see him when we were debating the attack on Libya but he declined to attend. While we were pleased that he was here tonight, we need his decisions rather than an hour's presence with private Members from his Atlantic caucus who are making speeches that will look good in their home constituencies. We need action from the Government far more than just an indication from the Associate Minister of Defence (Mr. Andre) that an inquiry will investigate the extent to which the Armed Forces were responsible for one of the fires in New Brunswick. We need far more from the Government than an indication of what the Government can provide through agreements in response to the larger disaster.

The lack of involvement in this debate by Ministers from Atlantic Canada is surely a part of the failure of the Government to deal with forestry as it should.

I share with all my colleagues a concern about what has occurred in Atlantic Canada in these last days. I share their relief that there was no loss of life and I share the regret that property losses have occurred. I share in rejoicing in the co-operation of the weather late on the weekend which has made it possible for the threat to be better dealt with. I respond as a Canadian and a human being to the adversities that face other human beings.

However, as a Member of Parliament with a constituency which is one of the large Schedule 3 constituencies in which forests have enormous importance, I am dissatisfied and angry