

The International Woodworkers of America wishes to extend its general support for the recent negotiated settlement of the softwood lumber dispute with the United States.

Under ideal conditions, many of us would have preferred to have our "day in court" in order to try to reduce the 15 per cent preliminary duty imposed by the U.S. Commerce Department last October. However, given the realities of the strong protectionist mood in the United States, it is extremely unlikely that the 15 per cent could have been reduced substantially in the final Commerce Department decision.

And even if the correct duty were eventually determined to be lower than 15 per cent, that decision could only be arrived at through three or four years of protracted court proceedings.

In the meantime, all of the revenues from the countervailing duty would continue to flow into U.S. government coffers at the rate of 12 per cent to 15 per cent on the selling price of lumber.

This representative of a trade union is understandably concerned about the future of his industry and the employment prospects of his members. He is endorsing what Bill C-37 represents because Bill C-37 will allow trade and employment to continue. It will allow the economic growth of the province to continue, particularly when taking into consideration the way in which the revenue from the tax will stay in Canada.

We must recognize that if Bill C-37 had not been drafted, there would be a tax imposed upon the export of Canadian lumber to the United States by the United States. There is no way Parliament could have held that back. We could have protested it and taken procedural action, but as the letter to which I have just referred indicates, such a procedure would be long and protracted and would have no guarantee of a positive result for Canada. Consequently, it was incumbent upon the Canadian Government, representing the Canadian people and their interests, to come to the kind of decision very often reached by individuals.

I can recall a lawyer telling me, when discussing a matter with him, that it depends upon how much money I would be willing to spend and the costs I would be willing to bear to make the point I had in mind. As a country, we have had to decide whether or not the price to be paid in undertaking a countervailing procedure would be worth the effort while this kind of negotiated effort could bring about a settlement which, in percentage terms, would have no more serious implications than those which were indicated by the United States Government. Even more, such a settlement would keep the revenues in Canada. To add to that, it would make it possible for those revenues to be distributed to the regions most concerned.

The provincial Governments will be receiving payments in accordance with the volume of trade and taxation paid from within each province. We should look at this agreement not only in the light of the short-term considerations such as full employment in the lumber industry but also in the light of the long-term considerations of all Canadians who are concerned that the lumber resources of Canada will continue and indeed be strengthened.

Last March I had the privilege of visiting Ethiopia to inspect the relief work taking place there. I was impressed by a stark fact. The one reason Ethiopia was suffering famine was that at the beginning of this century, over half of the country was

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

covered by trees while now, only 2 per cent of the country is covered by trees.

We must be concerned about the future of Canada's forests. I would hope that we would seize this new opportunity for revenue represented by Bill C-37 and urge the provincial Governments to use that revenue to bring about enhanced ecology programs which would do much to guarantee the future of Canada's forests. I suggest that for these reasons, we should look upon Bill C-37 as one that adds to the strength of confederation, Canada's economic viability and thus our sovereignty.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the remarks made by my good friend, the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse), who quoted a very famous Canadian and an architect of the Regina Manifesto. I hope he has read the rest of that gentleman's writings.

Any nation, including ours, that wishes to maintain and exercise its independence and sovereignty must pay a price. Sometimes the price is monetary, sometimes it is great public debate, dissent and argument. However, independence and sovereignty must be maintained even when it costs.

This issue was not begun by us. Canada was found not guilty some four years ago. The problems certain circles in the United States claim exist were not of our doing but of their own making, the making of the United States Government and Congress. They are the ones who set policies to provide for a U.S. dollar of high value. That was none of our doing and that is why the problem is mostly of their own making. Canada, as a self-respecting, independent and sovereign nation, should not allow itself to be victimized by such problems.

The Americans used the excuse that stumpage fees were to blame. Stumpage fees charged in New Brunswick are about eight times as high as those in British Columbia and stumpage fees charged in Ontario are about three times as high as those in British Columbia. In the 10 provinces and the two territories, stumpage fees and other forestry fees are all over the lot and there is nothing new about that.

The Government could have exempted New Brunswick, for example, or Ontario or Nova Scotia from the export tax. However, the agreement would allow the U.S. to do something it would do in any event, with or without our agreement, and that is to impose a duty in any case. That is the reality of the situation.

Under the constitutional set-up in the United States, there are many roadblocks including the U.S. administration, the President and his Cabinet, the International Trade Agency, the courts, the House of Representatives and the Senators. Under the American Constitution, every international agreement or treaty is subject to ratification by Congress.

In Canada, an international agreement or treaty is not subject to parliamentary debate or amendment. In effect, we are now debating an international agreement under the guise