

Softwood Lumber

I would also like to commend the members of the House who have spoken so far in trying to build a unified type of approach to the issue here. Maybe government members could go back to their ministers and say that it is a very national and very important issue, as it evidently is as we are all here this evening debating it so late, and that we should take some lobbying action in the United States and internationally.

My colleague from Cochrane—Superior put it very well earlier this evening when he mentioned that we must start looking at some type of retaliation, whether it is on fruit and vegetables that are coming in from California, whether we must start enforcing Canadian standards on American forest products that are coming in, whether we must just take that advertising campaign with regard to advising the Americans that their home costs are going to escalate because of their own tactics. I think it is important that we take some very definite steps.

I congratulate all members from all parties for the positions that have been taken here tonight. It has been very responsible and it is very refreshing to hear some of the comments this evening.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that I take the opportunity this morning to add my perspective to the decision made by the officials in the United States this week with regard to softwood lumber exports from Canada to the U.S. In doing so, I want to go back in time a bit.

I have been in this House since 1984. Early in my tenure here I remember my colleague from Skeena who, quite frankly, was a voice in the wilderness warning all of us, not just the government of the day but our own caucus and the Official Opposition, about the potential threat from the American Congress, the American administration and the American lumber lobby as they agitated toward an attack on Canada's softwood lumber producers. The member for Skeena was very persistent. Regretfully, everything that he warned us about has come to pass.

When he said back in the mid-1980s that we had to fight to the end the attacks by the American lumber industry, he was right. The Conservative government caved in. Instead of going through with the existing, dare I call it, dispute settlement mechanism in the States, the government caved in and imposed our own 15 per cent

softwood lumber tax. It has been suggested that part of that caving in was because of pressure from the Government of British Columbia, the then Social Credit government that saw a windfall profit for itself because eventually the money from the 15 per cent tax would come to it.

My colleague, the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley, has taken on the mantle from the member from Skeena. He has done a remarkable job in terms of keeping the issue alive and of making sure we were on top not only of the issue and not only of American politics, but of the wheeling and dealing among Canadian provinces and the federal government. It was he who raised the fact that Bill Vander Zalm and the Socred Minister of Forestry were keeping the Americans in touch with the negotiating strategy of the Canadian provinces and the Canadian government. In other words, they were selling us out as fast as we could make a tactical decision as to how the American pressure could be dealt with.

My colleague from Skeena—and this is in response to the member from the Liberal caucus who just spoke—pointed out the fact that years ago, before the imposition of the 15 per cent surtax, one of the ways in which we could have defeated the American pressure was to launch a massive government funded advertising campaign in the United States to point out to American consumers what they are now being reminded of, the fact that it is now going to add \$1,000 or \$1,500 or whatever it is to the price of a home because of the decision by the American government.

We wanted to do that back then to help make our case, but the government of the day, the same government there is today, said: "No, that is not the way to go".

I come from northwestern Ontario where after the fur industry, lumber became the next most appropriate means of creating wealth. We use our forests for both primary and secondary industries, so softwood lumber is extremely important to us. All of us in the northwest have sawmills in our ridings. All of us in the northwest have logging operations. All of us have pulp and paper manufacturing facilities. They are all inter-related. Even though we are talking today about softwood lumber which is really the sawmill operations, there is an inter-relationship because the chips and the waste products go off to the pulp and paper industry to assist it in its