

Softwood Lumber

I say it is unfortunate the United States had to pick on us in Canada, their closest neighbour, their closest ally and friend throughout the world, and yet they chose to pick on us. It will not be soon forgotten by those of us in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bélair: Mr. Speaker, considering how late it is, I believe you would find unanimous consent in order to free the pages.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious discussion we are having this evening, rather than a debate as it was characterized by several of the previous speakers.

It is very serious for Canada as a whole, but particularly serious I would suggest for the province of British Columbia.

In the last 10 years at the most, perhaps even a little shorter period, some 40 per cent of the 30,000 IWA members who were working in the woods of British Columbia and in the sawmills have lost their jobs.

• (2320)

Part of it was due to technological change and part of it was due to the depressed markets we are experiencing right now. Who knows where it is going to end?

We do not need this MOU dispute right now. We do not need this dispute with the Americans about selling our lumber to the States. I can recall attending a tourism presentation in the community of Ladysmith in my riding a year ago last summer. When the representative of the tourist department was introduced, she said: "Tourism is increasing to the extent that one day tourism will take over as the most important economic activity in British Columbia". When it came my turn to speak, I said: "I hope that day never comes because if the forest industry sinks so low that anything overtakes it in British Columbia then we are in real serious trouble".

The same thing applies to the whole of Canada. It is by far the greatest generator of foreign exchange that we have. Grains and oilseeds come second but a poor second. It is the products from our forests that we must keep producing if we are to be able to maintain the standard of living we have in Canada, if we are to maintain the level of economic activity we have in this great country.

There have been several disputes and the government is relying totally on the dispute resolving panels, the dispute settling panels, and saying that when it goes there we are bound to win.

I can recall the first one. It had to do with west coast fisheries. Of course we were confident there too. We knew right was on our side. We knew we had to have control of that resource if we were going to be able to husband it properly.

We did not win. We lost partially. We lost control of 20 per cent of the fish, and the American response through their trade representative was to the effect: "Well, that is all right for now, but we are not going to rest until we remove those restrictions entirely so that we have access to all of the fish being caught in British Columbia".

They do not mind us husbanding the resource. They do not mind us managing it and spending the money on it, but they want access to it for processing. They want the jobs that go with the processing industry. It was the processing industry representatives themselves who made that argument in Ottawa as well as in British Columbia. They know what is happening. They know that the Americans want those jobs down in the States.

During the free trade debate before it became law in this country or in the States, the arguments being put forward were to the effect that what was really at stake, or what the issue really was, was the tremendous trade imbalance between Canada and the U.S. The U.S. wanted to correct that imbalance from its point of view. It wanted to reduce the imports from Canada and increase the exports to Canada. To do that it has to make sure that we more than ever before become simply hewers of wood and drawers of water; let them do all the processing and let them send the processed goods back to Canada.

I fear this is what the Americans have in mind with respect to our softwoods because they have said that one of things bothering them is the fact that we control the export of round logs. They are doing the same thing but that does not matter. What they are doing is okay, but for us to do it is wrong because it does not give them the access that they want to our raw material. It goes not give them the right to manage our forests in the way they