

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

being denied it. If acid rain continues to fall on us, at least we would have some self-respect. We presently have neither a reduction in acid rain nor self-respect. I commend a more self-respecting approach to the Prime Minister in these issues. More than failure in our relationship with the United States, Canadian people deplore the context of that failure. Canadians want to see a self-respecting country asking for justice rather than the supine, sanguine acquiescence which has been characteristic of the Government.

I am sorry that I have only 10 minutes to speak because I have a lot more to say about this and other issues which fall within the framework of Canada-U.S. relations which I believe is the Achilles heel of the Government.

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate. One may wonder why a Member of Parliament from Prince Edward Island would get excited about this agreement since we are not known as a major exporter of softwood lumber products. We are known, first, as an agricultural province and, second, as a province with a great stake in the fisheries, that being our second most important industry. We are known as well for tourism.

However, forestry is also a very important sector on Prince Edward Island. Over the years we have negotiated forestry agreements with federal Governments which have done much for Prince Edward Island with regard to reforestation. I am sure that if this agreement does not affect the ability of the federal Government to deal with the provinces, Prince Edward Island will continue to ask for support in an effort to regain some of the forests which have been lost.

In the 1800s one of the main industries in my province was shipbuilding. I represent an area of the province which was most prominent in that industry. In the Port Hill area we now have a museum of the shipbuilding industry. We used to have tremendous stands of softwood and hardwood lumber, especially hemlock. Therefore, Prince Edward Island had a major stake in the forestry industry at one time. However, since the land was very fertile, many of the forests were cut down to make room for the agricultural sector. We still have a lot of Class 3 land which can produce a lot of good quality lumber. That is why we are in the reforestation business at this time.

I would like to discuss this Bill in terms of what it does to our relationship with the United States and to the sovereignty of Canada. Bill C-37 is entitled "an Act respecting the imposition of a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products". My colleague, the Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin), said that the Bill should be entitled "an Act respecting the imposition of the American administration's will on the weak and vacillating Tory administration in Canada".

Members on the Government side have said that Members of the Opposition do not like the Americans. That is not true at all. My father came to Canada at the age of nine years. He and my grandfather selected Canada as their home at that

time. My Dad passed away one year ago at the age of 94. He was a great Canadian.

• (1730)

I must say that most of my relatives are Americans. Actually about 75 per cent of my cousins live in the Massachusetts area. Therefore, I do not feel that I, or most members of the Opposition, have anything detrimental to say about the Americans. They have been good neighbours and good allies. Certainly Canada has done an awful lot during its history in conjunction with the United States. However, we all have good neighbours in our various localities. That does not mean we have to crawl into bed with them. We want our country to remain an independent sovereign nation.

I look at this tax as an erosion of our sovereignty. There have been many indications of this erosion since this Government took power. There was the ice-breaker which moved through our northern waters without asking permission, not recognizing our sovereignty in the North. That was a very contentious issue. I know the Government did a lot of howling about it and I am sure the Canadian people in the last year or so, and as long as this Government is in power, will certainly take a tough stand when it comes to our sovereignty as it relates to the North and, certainly, as it relates to our country.

The softwood lumber export tax is a vitally important matter for many reasons. Of course, my colleagues have expounded upon those reasons at some length. We have heard about the negative economic impacts. However, in the short time I have to speak, I would like to comment a little more about the loss of sovereignty. I would like to expand on the subject with regard to the limits this sort of action puts upon Canada's ability to manage its own natural resources. I might add that this episode is only the latest in a number of U.S. tariff measures taken against Canadian exports since this Government took office.

In June of 1985, the International Trade Commission imposed a penalty duty of 20.75 per cent on imports of dried salt codfish from Canada. The affected companies included the Canadian Saltfish Corporation and the United Maritime Fishermen. There were other companies in Labrador and down through Quebec, some of them in the Prime Minister's own riding. These companies were all affected by the imposition of that duty. Last March, 1986, we had a 5.82 per cent duty imposed on fresh Canadian groundfish exports destined for the United States markets. Originally, there was a preliminary study which suggested it should be 6.85 per cent. However, after going through the proper channels it was found it should be only 5.82 per cent, and that was the duty which was imposed.

We did not see any great change in the fish market with the United States over that duty, but there was a good reason why that did not happen. That was because of the value of the Canadian dollar in relation to the American dollar and also because the markets were extremely strong in the United States. Therefore, it did not affect the Canadian fishing