

Supply—Forestry

will disappear and the provinces will assume the responsibilities covered by the program.

Generally speaking, Mr. Chairman, the department has had a good year. We expect to begin our expansion this year and by 1972 we should have doubled our personnel and facilities. I expect hon. members of the house will have some comment to make on the administration of the department, and I will be grateful for any suggestions for improving its work. These are my introductory remarks, Mr. Chairman.

● (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the minister hopes the discussion on his estimates will be as brief as his own introduction. There are, however, a few items I wish to discuss with him. I am sure that before the main estimates are completed we shall have answers to these questions.

With respect to item 1 of these estimates, I am sure the minister will agree with me that the setting up of this department by the former government was a reasonably expeditious act which has brought excellent results to the economy of Canada. The department actually was set up following extended hearings before the mines, forests and waters committee respecting the forestry branch, as it was then, of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. It became quite obvious during the course of those hearings, at which I attended, that forestry, which provided one of the main exports of this country, and which was merely one section of a department of government, actually deserved more serious attention than it was then getting.

It appeared quite obvious that the main shortcoming was in the question of research and co-ordination of provincial effort. As a result, the department was set up under the ministry of the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton, who now sits near me in the house.

As the minister has pointed out, research is the main aspect of that government department's work. I should like the minister to reply to questions concerning research centres. With regard to that subject I should like to ask him two questions. First, are there plans to expand research laboratories throughout Canada, under this department? Second, is use being made, to its fullest extent, of provincial facilities? We have heard the minister say that the provinces are beginning to rely on the federal department's research laboratories for much of their own

technical research information. As I said, I should like to know whether this is being expanded as a strictly federal aspect of things in all parts of the country, and whether use is being made of existing provincial facilities.

The minister mentioned a couple of examples of disease. He did not mention one that is possibly much more serious to the public at large, and I refer to the Dutch elm disease. This disease has been taking a terrific toll of trees in most of the eastern provinces. While the disease has largely affected ornamental trees, it has moved into the forestry industry, and I know that great concern is being felt about its effects. I should like to ask the minister, if he would, to tell us what success has been achieved in combating this disease, and whether research is continuing to find some answer to this very serious problem.

On the question of exports, would the minister bring us up to date on plywood matters? We have had problems in Canada with respect to plywood, both as to its importation from other countries at very, very low prices, making it difficult for local producers to compete, and also as to its export into the United States market, where we have also had difficulty. I should like the minister to report to the committee on this particular subject. That is something which is very important to those of us who live in parts of the country where plywood is produced.

I turn for a moment to the question of feed grain assistance, which the minister mentioned. If the terms of the bill the minister is introducing are the same as the ones the former government introduced, I think he will find ready support for it. However, rumour has it that certain changes are being made in the approach to this problem. If so, I think he may find some opposition to certain sections of the bill. The minister mentioned it in passing; I do so, likewise.

We do not intend to delay the passage of the first item of the estimates. That item has served a very useful purpose in the economy of this country. We can see the results in the balance of payment figures. On a great many of our industries we lose money. However, the forest products industry maintains a favourable balance, and we are all looking forward to its being one of the continuing assets of the future, forestry being a renewable resource. If proper care is taken of our forests, we shall be able to continue with our exports.

I hope the minister can answer some of the questions asked. There will be other questions as we proceed to other items. However,