

S.O. 29

He could not see his barn, his buildings or anything else. As he drove up the lane trying to get closer to see what was going on, he saw huge flames jumping up over the top of the barn. However, by some miracle the wind shifted at the last moment and the fire retreated instead of engulfing his farm property.

You can imagine the concern and fear that he or any other person would have felt in the circumstances, only to find that his farm was suddenly saved. Fortunately we have had many instances of that kind of thing rather than total losses. However, I point out again that we have lost something like 1,000 hectares of woodland in Prince Edward Island already. We are urging people to be very cautious in the next number of days until we get some rain to help ensure that the current crisis passes.

On Friday morning I was still in Ottawa before returning to my constituency and I was watching *Canada AM* on television. I was rather intrigued, if not a little bit disappointed, by a map depicting the Atlantic region used by the television network which carried *Canada AM*. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland were in full evidence. All the waters making up the Gulf of St. Lawrence, along with Anticosti Island, were vividly displayed. Unfortunately, Prince Edward Island was missing. I quickly got in touch with the broadcaster, reminded him that Prince Edward Island was still there and that we had some fires as well. I am sure they are moving to correct that particular art work. I did not plan to bring that into the debate this evening but I think that it is important to show that no tragedy of this kind can be more significant to one area of the country than to another.

• (2220)

In Prince Edward Island we have had over 50 fires already, we have lost a thousand acres and have had four cottages and some farm buildings burned. Fortunately we have not lost any houses.

I want to recognize those who are making a contribution to prevent fires, our provincial fire chief, our provincial Department of Forestry, our firemen, our fire departments, volunteer fire-fighters, community groups, organizations, individuals, anyone who has helped in this very serious situation.

I feel that the Government has some obligation here and I want to bring some attention to the situation in our province. We will be looking for the full co-operation of all levels of Government, federal, provincial and municipal, along with individual woodlot owners to see that everyone fulfils their obligations.

In closing I would like to congratulate the Member for Fundy Royal for having brought this matter before the House under emergency debate provisions.

**Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join other private Members in this debate on the fires which have been devastating various parts of Atlantic Canada, particularly New Brunswick and

Newfoundland, but which have not left areas of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island unscathed.

The loss which has been suffered in the way of forest destruction is a significant one, and it is one which will be a loss to private owners and to large companies. It is a loss to the societies of each of these provinces. It means lost opportunities for employment, greater challenges for reforestation and for the maintenance of the forest industries of Atlantic Canada. Being a Member from northwestern Ontario, Thunder Bay—Nipigon, an area in which forestry is also very important, I would like to use my opportunity this evening to say something about the importance of dealing with the needs of the forest industry in which fighting the ravages of fire is one of the important challenges that faces Governments in their responsibilities for Crown lands.

I would also like to use the occasion to recognize other problems that face us. I might say, on the matter of fires themselves, that I remember very well in the spring of 1980 when we in northwestern Ontario had similarly hot, dry weather, unseasonal weather in the late days of May. Fire devastated various areas, particularly that very large fire in the Kenora area which destroyed such large stands of timber at the time. Those experiences of fire in our part of Canada certainly sensitize one to what has been experienced lately by the people of the four Atlantic provinces. I share with them the satisfaction that no lives were lost while, of course, feeling the loss of property, in addition to forests. I am happy that rain has come to various areas and provided assistance to the fire-fighters.

In dealing with these challenges we need more than just speeches by private Members. We have not heard from any of the Ministers from the Atlantic provinces. I expect that the Minister of State for Forestry (Mr. Merrithew) is otherwise occupied and regrets the fact that he has not been able to be here and address this issue. The Minister of State for Forestry is himself from New Brunswick and must have felt very keenly the ravages of fire in these last days, having had responsibility for natural resources in the provincial Government, and realizing what the significance of this loss would be.

My friend from Skeena has suggested this evening that Government should take a leadership role in ensuring that there are adequate resources to fight fires, ensuring that we have the aircraft and the supplies needed, certainly in chemical firefighting, aside from the use of water bombers, helicopters and so on.

It is suggested that there should be a leadership role taken by the Canadian Government in ensuring that equipment is available to be moved across the country as the challenge of the forest fire arrives. Fires do not usually sweep every part of Canada at the same time, but there are other times when the threat of forest fire is a decidedly regional matter when the very great danger that occurs calls for the resources of other provinces. There is some co-ordination and movement of equipment as the communications media have been pointing out to us. Equipment has been moved from as far away as the