

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that it is really sad and disastrous that the Government does not allow a more thorough, a more in-depth debate and has decided with that notice to curtail the debate in order to deliver the goods to their good American friends, and show them once again that Canada is just a tiny partner, and that this tiny partner is willing to do whatever the Americans wish in the end.

Mr. Speaker, that decision will have painful and dramatic effects in the long run, and thousands of jobs will be lost in Quebec as well as in every other province.

The problem may prove to be particularly severe in Quebec. My colleagues before me have described the situation as it exists in Quebec. The problems of the forest industry may have been overlooked these past few years. Massive investments will have to be made in that strategic area. The Government will have to do its share, but so will producers. They will have to contribute huge amounts of money. Producers will therefore be forced in a way to co-operate, to share in the reforestation process, and on top of that participation, they will have to pay the famous 15 per cent tax.

I don't think you have to be an accountant, an expert in that field to understand that lumber producers in Quebec, in the very short term, will be clearly powerless, will be at a clear disadvantage in comparison with other producers in other provinces.

That is another outcome of that Bill, Mr. Speaker.

A number of speakers have also dealt at length with the disastrous consequences of that agreement on the very important lumber sector.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I will once again urge all my colleagues in the ministerial team opposite to take a closer, deeper look at this matter. They will realize that this Bill will have other consequences, other impacts beyond the fact that the \$600 million will stay in Canada rather than go to the United States. I believe that if they took the trouble to meet with producers, they would soon realize the painful and dramatic consequence or consequences of that agreement on those producers and on a very large number of jobs, as I said earlier. Some people have said that 250,000 jobs may be affected in Quebec.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to participate in the dying moments of the debate on this very important subject. It is interesting to note that today we had another example of a tough negotiator on the Government side. First, we had General Custer who is not here now, but she is probably somewhere. Today the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) gave us an example of his negotiating skill with the French Government. Look how tough he was, Mr. Speaker. He has given away everything.

Mr. Fulton: Fifteen thousand extra tonnes.

Mr. Rodriguez: That is right, 15,000 extra tonnes, and no agreement on conservation of the fish stocks. He just gave it away. That is really tough negotiating. The Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) negotiated with the western premiers with respect to the National Energy Program. Even I could come out a winner if I gave everything away. She negotiated with the Governments in the Atlantic regions with respect to offshore resources. Anyone can come up smelling like roses if they are prepared to surrender certain interests like the national interests of the country.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) was saying to me that the way in which the Minister negotiated with the Americans was all political and she really gave up on this softwood lumber issue. I replied that there seems to me to be more to it than meets the eye. I thought what was really betrayed was the courage, conviction, perseverance and determination to stand firm when the interests of the nation are at stake. As a democratic socialist, I believe in the decentralization of political power and the evolution of federal powers. I think there are certain concerns which are vital to the existence of the nation. One of those concerns has to be our relationship with other countries. Another concern has to do with the natural resources of the country.

Mr. Vander Zalm, the Premier of British Columbia, obviously convinced the Conservative Government that his position should carry the day, which was that we should negotiate our rights. But, we cannot have a foreign power telling a sovereign nation how it is going to exploit its resources. We cannot have a foreign nation telling us what stumpage fees we are going to charge. We cannot have a foreign nation telling us which particular remanufacturing will be exempt and which will not, and how much tax we have to put on. No self-respecting nation would allow itself to be pushed around like that, but this Conservative Government did. The dangerous part about that is that a precedent is set. The Americans had a patsy negotiating with them, and once they found the soft spot they proceeded to push the Government around on softwood. What will be next, the Auto Pact?

Mr. Fulton: Steel and fish.

Mr. Rodriguez: Whatever.

An Hon. Member: Nickel.

Mr. Rodriguez: You have it, brother. The Conservatives have allowed themselves to be pushed around. They have allowed this to happen. John A. Macdonald is probably rolling over right now at the sad and sorry state to which the Conservative Party has fallen. For example, what came out of the initial ruling of the Commerce Department in the United States—