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faster than it is produced in the forest. That means that we in New Brunswick are harvesting our capital. We are withdrawing from our bank account, and this is a very serious situation. Sawmills, and other users of quality material, will have to adopt better utilization standards than are currently practised, and accept lower quality raw material, if they wish to survive in the future.

● (1620)

Can this balance be improved, Mr. Speaker? I submit to you that it can, but it can only be improved if forest policies in New Brunswick and, in a very rapidly expanding way, in all of the Provinces recognize that our present forest harvest is at a level which puts us in the sphere of farming on forest land. If we do not treat this land and its harvest as the agricultural sector would treat its crops, we will find ourselves in a position which will be economically embarrassing. It will then, of course, become a very important social problem.

I am, have been and shall continue to be supportive of the agricultural approach to forest management and harvesting until greater evidence than has ever been amassed as yet can persuade me otherwise. I would like to tell you why this is so, Mr. Speaker. I remember at one time being associated in the provincial Legislature with the former Minister of Highways from the County of Northumberland, Mr. Anderson. He is since deceased and was quite old when I knew him. However, he said to me: "I want to tell you, Fred, about a time when we had the budworm in the Miramichi. I was just a young boy at that time, but the devastation that that budworm perpetrated in our area was such that one could stand on a hilltop and look for miles and not see a live evergreen tree." He said: "You could go into the woods to hunt. There were no deer and no moose, but you could travel on deadfalls without ever putting a foot on the ground because those evergreen trees had died as a result of the budworm presence." He went on to say: "My family was a forest family," as I am sure the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi knows, "and our family business existed and survived for years with only little patches of forest. However, while we existed, virtually all of the then massive logging industry on the Miramichi disappeared from existence."

How important was that conversation, Mr. Speaker? The Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi will remember when Chatham was one of the biggest banking centres in Canada by virtue of the export of lumber from the Miramichi and other watersheds close enough to be exported through that facility. More money changed hands in banks in Chatham than in most city banks in Canada. The depression which exists on the Miramichi today can be attributed in very large measure to the early decline of the forest industry and its failure even to this day to recoup itself through natural regeneration to the level that existed in 1900.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): It started in 1825.

Mr. McCain: This was an additional infestation. The first one was in 1825.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): And the great fire.

Mr. McCain: At that point in time, the great fire of the Miramichi took place, and I think it is of interest to note that if one is to examine the history of the forest from the Miramichi to the Penobscot watershed, one would find that the budworm did in fact virtually eliminate forest from the estuary of the Miramichi to the Penobscot watershed in the State of Maine, and most of it burned shortly thereafter. It is from that state that nature did regenerate a forest.

I say that we must farm the industry because we have what is known as a fire forest. That is the official professional term applied to the kind of forest that exists particularly in eastern Canada. The forest grows up, matures and becomes a victim of old age, insect or disease and is replaced. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you yourself can remember the white ridges of hardwood that came into existence as the yellow birch died and whitened. We no longer had a significant hardwood industry over those ridges nor will we have in this century any significant yellow birch harvest.

That is an example of what has happened to the forest in our lifetime. We are also experiencing at present the infestation of the budworm. I will refer to an example of what would happen if we do not treat this industry as a farm operation. As all Hon. Members will remember, there was a court case in Nova Scotia, and I am sorry that I do not have my summary of that court case with me. I have said this before and I reiterate it because it is so important. Among other evidence given at that trial, it was said that if forest management is not improved and if the budworm is continually allowed to ravage that forest, there will be a loss of 8,000 jobs in the forest industry in the Cape Breton area of the Province of Nova Scotia. That is what we are looking at in southwest New Brunswick where we have already lost 10 million cords of wood, wood that is no longer fit for harvest. That is the price we have paid. How close does that price come to the loss of 8,000 jobs in the southwest corner of my Province?

Those who object to spraying the forests have said many a time that forest management is the answer, and I agree. However, the application of pesticide must become a part of forest management if we are to have a forest crop at all. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? That is the only way the reforestation referred to by the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi can be carried out effectively in not all but in much of New Brunswick, because the soil is so productive that not only will it produce wood fibre but it will produce ferns, white birches, blueberries and hazelnut bushes. These plants spring up almost simultaneously when the ground is denuded of forest coverage. If we then reforest that ground and if we do not protect the seedlings from the cover of these weeds—and I refer to them in the farming sense as weeds because they are not of an economic value—do you know, Mr. Speaker, what the mortality rate would be of the little trees that are planted there? It