

Government Orders

four times the acreage that is used in agricultural land. As we drive through or fly over the country we cannot help but notice how large the harvesting process is. As we fly over British Columbia or northern Ontario, even parts of Saskatchewan, we see huge areas that have been laid waste as a result of the clear-cutting system we have in place. We can observe big bare spots on the landscape from one to five miles in the air.

Canadians have to be made aware of what that does when we clear huge areas like that. What happens to the local residents of small towns in the area when the resource that they are relying on for jobs is depleted? It is very difficult to continue strong economic and social units in those towns, to raise families, to establish churches and businesses, when the harvesting is done in such a way that forests are depleted and jobs are no longer sustainable.

I urge the House to support this subamendment and enhance the ability of the government to make people aware of how harmful that kind of development can be and how there are other options that we can adopt.

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to support the amendment put forward by my colleague which adds to the motion of the minister to enhance public awareness of the social, economic and environmental benefits derived from Canadian forests, the further requirement or onus upon the new ministry to enhance public awareness of the principles of sustainable development regarding our forest resources.

I am also very pleased to do this within the context of the bill as a whole, which sets up for the first time, I believe, in Canada, a full minister and department of forests.

• (1310)

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, I would like again to congratulate the minister. I know he has had this goal for some time. It has been a long gestation period. We are finally getting there and what we are trying to do by working together, and I believe I speak for all parties in this regard, is to try at this time to set up a full ministry of forestry to ensure that it has the strongest mandate possible in order to preserve and enhance an industry that has both historically and in terms of its

economic contribution done more for Canada and Canadians than probably any other industry.

I am also very pleased to be addressing this particular amendment at this time because just last weekend in the city of Nelson, which is my home town, and one of the centres of my constituency of Kootenay West—Revelstoke, there was a conference called “Getting High on Nature”. I think it will turn out to have played a very important part in increasing exactly this public awareness not only of the principles of sustainable development, but also the other mandates that are listed as being important functions of this ministry and department.

The conference “Getting High on Nature” was actually hosted by School District No. 7 which encompasses the city of Nelson and surrounding area. It was the brainchild of a Mr. Bob Harrigan who is a well known communicator, particularly in western Canada, on subjects related to the environment and more recently coupled with the phrase “sustainable development”.

This conference included about 120 high school students and some 300 educators, both educational administrators and public school teachers from elementary and high schools throughout British Columbia and other provinces in western Canada. The key participants from across the country, some of them of international renown, dealt with a number of areas of environmental concern. I was able to be present at some of the ceremonial aspects of the conference between other responsibilities in the constituency and noted that regardless of which workshop—at least 20 or 30 workshops at which the educators and the students were working together to get a better grasp of the complexities of all of these issues—whether they were talking about soil, water or air, or any subject related to the environment, forestry always played a role.

There were, of course, particular workshops and a number of keynote speakers who dealt primarily with the principles of sustainable development and with the intricacies of the forest industry and its particular problems, but regardless of the single topic, forestry always played a part.

The minister will know, and anyone acquainted with the forest industry will know, that if you are talking about soil quality, a great deal of attention must be paid