

Softwood Lumber

• (2350)

We have seen it with the Japanese and the semiconductor problem where the Japanese created an incredibly efficient industry in Japan and were shipping products into the United States. The American industry could not compete any more. So what did they do? They dumped on the Japanese as though it were the Japanese who were wrong.

We saw it a few years ago in Detroit when the American car industry was no longer competing with the import industry because the import industry from Japan was very smart. The Americans were still building gas guzzlers and nobody wanted to buy them.

What did they do? The American workers bought a brand new Toyota. It was parked outside the plant and then the workers paid one dollar each to smash the Toyota as a symbol of their anger against Japan for competing against their inferior product.

Their system is if you cannot beat the competitor, beat up the competitor. That is what they are doing to the lumber industry in Canada today.

We have a very efficient industry. As my friend from Nanaimo—Cowichan mentioned, there has been a reduction in the workforce many times over since I worked in it years ago. When I worked in it at the turn of the century, about 1950—

An hon. member: Which century?

Mr. Friesen: Which century. There was a workforce of 75,000 to 100,000 in British Columbia. Today it is down to 30,000 or 25,000 partly because of restructuring the industry, partly because of ersatz materials, but it is creating a problem for our workforce.

We have a very competitive industry, a high-tech industry in Canada. If the Americans cannot compete, that is their problem as long as there is a level playing field. But what is fair to them is not necessarily fair to any other outsider who was watching the way they carry on.

For all that has been said about the free trade agreement, we would be in terrible shape today if there was no opportunity to go to a higher court of appeal. There we can take part and be part of the dispute settlement mechanism itself. We can have our people on the panel so that there is a fair election of the chairman of that panel and we become part of the decision-making

process to make sure that it is fair and honest, with objective criteria, rather than the way they have functioned.

So I say that we have to carry on and be united in this country in our opposition to the American tactics. We cannot let their artificial shortage of logs allow them to create an excuse to destroy our industry. We cannot allow them to smash us just because they cannot compete any longer.

I appreciate the kind of debate that has been going on here tonight. Members from all sides of the House have banded together in a show of unity that we cannot allow the Americans to do this to us.

We are united in our concern for the employees, the workers, the companies, the payrolls, the products of our country. We stand together to make sure that we win this battle against the United States.

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, before starting I would like to say to the hon. member who just finished that the speech he gave was an excellent speech. It is one of the better ones I have heard from that side of the House in a long time. I was very pleased to hear it.

[*Translation*]

Before getting into details about the way the United States treat our softwood lumber exports, I would like to say a few words about the forest industry in Canada and its importance to our economy.

You will agree, Mr. Speaker, that this will be the canvas that will allow us to better illustrate what is at stake in the matter we are debating tonight in this House. So when considering the importance of the forest industry, it is important to realize that our country was built partly on that industry. In fact, for a long time, it was the pillar of our economy. It still remains today one of the main building blocks of our country.

The importance of the forest industry to the Canadian economy is undeniable. Canada has 4.36 million square kilometres of forest. That represents about 176 square metres for each of the 25 million Canadians. Our wooded territory covers more than twice the area of the European Economic Community, nearly twice the area of Mexico and accounts for 15 per cent of the world's forests.