

Supply—Northern Affairs

There is another aspect of research to which more attention should be given, and that is with respect to herbicides for brush control. I realize that private industry is doing a lot in this connection, but I think even more could be done. Further, I have in mind the Russian experiments to develop what they call living firebreaks by the use of plants which have a very high moisture content, and this is something which could be investigated with some intensity in Canada.

Forestry research shows slow progress in terms of conclusions. The minister was kind enough to provide me with a five-year progress report of R.C.17, which is a very intricate bit of research work. Many agencies have co-operated in this connection and the research work was carried out on one of the slopes of lake Superior. After five years the most discouraging thing, although perhaps a very proper thing from the scientific point of view, is the lack of recommendations.

There are two points mentioned which I would like to draw to the attention of the house, first that scarification does help to create good seed bed conditions, and the fact that herbicides used in certain ways do help to cut out counter-growth, which assists in the providing of regeneration for the conifers. There are, however, very few conclusions, and the difficulties with respect to forest research are all old ones. It is a real challenge to the administration to try to get some conclusions from the foresters.

I would like to mention to the minister two pulp and paper industries which are in juxtaposition in my own area and which have completely contradictory forest policies. Yet they are taking those policies from the point of view of their respective foresters, who have gone into the situation. One company believes that the whole future of the pulp and paper industry lies in the spruce forests, and they are therefore concentrating upon planting where regeneration is poor. They plant over 2 million trees a year and are making strenuous efforts to help natural regeneration and so bring back the limits to their former state. The second company, which is right next door with almost identical terrain, also measured in thousands of square miles, bases its whole forest policy upon the idea of cellulose per acre. This company says it does not matter a hoot about spruce and its longer fibres, but that the chemical engineer is now playing the operative role in the forest industry. He will clear up this whole problem for us, and he is already doing it and is enabling us to use hardwoods. They say, furthermore, that in the next decade or two the whole point of the matter will be cellulose per acre, and that the question of

the superior qualities of the spruce fibres for making newsprint and other pulp products will not be a factor at all.

Just that very dichotomy points up the magnitude of the forestry problem in determining what we are going to do with our forestry research. I have talked to a great many foresters and have had many contacts with them, and there is a feeling—and it is expressed by a former employee, Mr. Brown—that there is no leadership forthcoming from the federal government in this particular field. Whether or not there are constitutional problems, if we want to get anywhere in this field there has to be that leadership.

In other words there is a tremendous challenge to the minister and to his department. And this is not in the north. This is not Frobisher bay. This does not concern resources about which we know nothing. This relates to the breadbasket of this country, and I suggest to the minister that the breadbasket of this country is no longer on the prairies; it is in the boreal forests where we find our pulp and paper resources.

An hon. Member: What does the hon. member for Assiniboia say to that?

Mr. Fisher: He has just been complaining from behind. I do not mind somewhat overstating this point in relation to what the hon. member for Assiniboia tells me, but I think we have gone on long enough paying such marked attention to the agricultural interests, especially to the grain interests. It is not that there is anything wrong with that, but in the process we have lost sight of this forestry industry which has brought in even more revenue and which has even sharper problems.

I do not know whether one of the solutions would be to put in support prices for pulpwood—that is a question for the Minister of Agriculture to worry about—but I do know that one of the main problems is determining how the silviculture plan should be laid out and what guiding principles we should be following. This involves the department of the Minister of Finance, because the whole fiscal policy of the government in relation to the forest industry is in question.

As the minister is probably aware if he has read any of the representations from the industry, or even from the unions involved in the industry, this point was strikingly illustrated in the last few years when Ontario introduced a new logging tax. Immediately a howl went up from the pulp and paper interests. What did the premier of Ontario say? He said he had to get more