

Government Orders

I may remind him that in Québec, 94 million hectares of land are covered with forest. That is probably why I concentrated on my own province. Its forestry industry includes 8 pulp plants, 49 paper mills, 121 sawmills, 4 plywood plants and 10 particle board plants. I think he will realize that the importance of this industry was one more reason for me to talk mainly about my own province.

In Québec, forestry is responsible for 229,000 jobs, which means one out of thirteen. Sales of forestry products total 10.8 billion. Mr. Speaker, I think I had good reason to be somewhat partial to the province of Québec, and I can assure the Hon. Member that when I say Québec, I also include the riding of Gaspé.

[English]

Mr. Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of my hon. colleague from Gaspé. Given that the department of forestry received an 11.9 per cent cut in its 1989-90 budget, that 47 person-years were trimmed from the department, and that the new forestry department to be created by Bill C-29 does not have control over its own funds, in having to go a multitude of other departments and agencies, I would submit that the government is creating a department of forestry but not in the fullest sense. I humbly recognize this bill as being a modest beginning.

• (1210)

I would just like to ask the member for Gaspé, if he could possibly look ahead to the not too distant future, next year, whether the department of forestry would have greater autonomy by having its own budget. Would it be allowed to mature into a department that would have the fiscal resources it requires to protect and serve one of Canada's most precious natural resources?

[Translation]

Mr. Marin: Mr. Speaker, obviously, if we had been able to create a full department we would have done so.

The purpose of the Bill before the House today is to provide a framework. In fact, the department's authority will be quite considerable at the level of co-ordination. Later on, with the help of nationwide consultation, we will be able to give the Minister what the Hon. Member suggested and perhaps suggest a number of other aspects

the Government might consider, to give the department greater responsibility.

Mr. Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague from Gaspé (Mr. Marin) and I must say that his speech in general is very well thought.

One of our colleagues in the Opposition raised the subject of the Eastern Plan, saying that Dr. Marin, the Hon. Member for Gaspé, did not talk enough about it. Mr. Speaker, I know very well from a visit I made with the Forestry Minister this summer what people told us about the Eastern Plan; they were very glad to have the federal Government participate in a forestry program and they urged the federal Government to pass a bill to set up a full-fledged department as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, if it is possible, I would like to ask my colleague from Gaspé to describe the federal Government's involvement in quater detail and also to describe the reason those concerned want a full-fledged department, one that will really look after forests throughout the country, instead of going through a junior minister. So I would ask my colleague from Gaspé to give us some explanation of this.

Mr. Marin: Mr. Speaker, for someone, who did not want questions, I am doing very badly.

It is quite obvious that our experience over the past few years in eastern Québec with the plan known as the Eastern Plan has been wonderful and this forestry program, we spent \$40 million recently on private forests alone. On public forests, under the Canada-Québec ERDA agreements, we spent a great deal of money—\$150 million. Obviously, if every region could develop at this rate—the advantage is that all these funds, these programs must come under a federal department.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period for questions and comments is over. Debate. The Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Bélair).

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, before starting my speech, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Restigouche (Mr. Arseneault) and congratulate him on the excellent speech he made yesterday. It was very well researched and contained a lot of information that will certainly be useful in the years to come.