

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Manicouagan): Over the past day and a half, we have heard many comments about the impact of deforestation, clear-cutting, what is taking place in the tropical jungle and other practices on global warming.

I would like to hear your comments on how Canada perceives that problem. What does the government intend to do in order to minimize our contribution to the problems caused by the destruction of the forests?

Mr. Bouchard: One of the things that surprised me when I began attending international conferences on the environment was that Canada does not have all that good a reputation with respect to the way it manages its own forest.

For example, I appeared as a witness before a parliamentary commission of inquiry established by the Bundestag, in Bonn. I was a witness at a three-hour session where we discussed Canada's difficulties and what we intend to do about them. They, too, are in the process of preparing a plan. In the course of our discussion, I realized that they had a rather negative perception of Canadian harvesting practices.

So, our fine words about how we must protect our own natural resources, which are like a sacred trust held by Canadians for the rest of the planet, have finally been thrown back at us. And they are being thrown back at us more and more at these international conferences.

Last week in Washington, I included in my commitment the undertaking to review our forestry policy and implement new ones in Canada. Although I am certainly not trying to pass the buck, we all know full well that under the Constitution, the provinces have primary jurisdiction over forestry matters, and that it is very difficult for the federal government to interfere in provincial affairs. It is the same old co-existence problem.

On forestry, environment and energy federal-provincial committees, however, we are increasingly establishing national standards. How can we do this? Well, when the federal government commits considerable sums of money to the implementation of forestry policy, it can impose certain conditions and force the provinces to meet standards that we will jointly define.

The Joint Chairman: Dear colleague, I would like to thank you all for your participation and for your questions and comments. Mr. Chairman, my congratulations to you on an excellent parliamentary forum.

The meeting is adjourned.