

Other Members have stated earlier that forestry is a major industry for many Canadians. It is a major industry in my riding, and I am sure it is a major industry for most of the people who are still in the House tonight. It is time that we came to grips not only with forest fires in Atlantic Canada, which is more specifically the topic tonight, but with the whole cycle in the forestry industry. We have yet to develop an adequate reforestation program. We will not have an adequate reforestation program until we say that a tree cut down must be replaced by a new seedling, that a tree lost through natural occurrences should be replaced by some mechanism, whether through nature or some program.

● (2200)

A couple of weeks ago members of the NDP caucus remarked that it was National Forest Week. We talked about the fact that other countries have reforestation programs which are much superior to ours. We talked about the fact that there is an industrial strategy for the forest industry in other countries, which is not the case here. Due to the fact that we do not have a reforestation program and the fact that we do not have an adequate industrial strategy for the forest sector, forest fires, wherever they occur, create a further burden for the people of the region. Already we cannot guarantee that we will have the trees to provide the lumber, pulp and paper that we need for our industries. We have known for years that we have not come to grips with this very serious problem.

Other Members who spoke during the first two hours of this debate indicated the number of acres that were burned in the last three or four days. You have heard estimates of how many jobs that will cost in those regions. Some of those jobs would have been lost anyway, but some of them would have been saved if there was an adequate reforestation program in the country. Some of that loss could not be controlled, but some of it could be. That is an issue which should properly be before this Parliament.

Other Members who spoke earlier talked about laying the blame. They mentioned that some of the fires were created by nature, that some were created by carelessness, and that some, or at least one, may have been caused by the activities of the Forces base at Gagetown. As the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Andre) indicated, we do not want to prejudge that situation. However, military officials are on record as indicating that they probably did cause the fire in that region.

For the most part, we cannot prevent fires caused by nature. Over the years the country has tried to deal with the problem of fires caused by carelessness. There have been advertising programs from time to time. We have had programs in the schools. As a teacher I can remember asking my students to draw posters illustrating what we can do to prevent forest fires. For the most part Canadians, because they love their woods and natural resources and because they are concerned about what they do to both nature and humanity, are fairly careful. There will always be exceptions. There will always be those

who smoke when they should not and are careless about where they put their butts and matches. There will always be those who will start a grass fire in their backyard and the fire will get away from them. Those things should not happen, but they will happen from time to time.

Once again, we do not want to prejudge the case of the Gagetown incident. However, I can speak from my own experience having spent a summer at Shilo, Manitoba. We did not take tank gun practice when the weather was dry. We knew that that was not an appropriate time to be engaged in that type of practice and we engaged in other activities at that time.

I wish the Associate Minister of Defence were still in the House. I would like to ask him to look into whether or not the Forces at Gagetown were responsible for the fire in that region and the loss of houses and other buildings there. I would also like to ask him to ensure that there are standards in place which the military across the country will follow closely to ensure that their actions do not create adverse conditions such as forest fires.

It is not my intention to speak at any length in this debate. We have indicated, through our spokesperson, the Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton), that we are very concerned about the forest industry and the individuals who have been affected by the fires in Atlantic Canada. It is more than a matter of concern. In addition to that, we would like the Government to come up with a concrete plan for what it is going to do with the forest industry. I spoke earlier about the need for a full Minister. I think it is essential to ensure that there is a Department with the political, economic, and research clout to ensure that we can develop and maintain our forest industry.

The forest industry is one of the major employers in my riding. There are people employed in the woods, in the sawmills, and in the pulp and paper mills. It is a major industry in my area and in other areas. The present Government has been no better than the previous Government with regard to coming to grips with this industry. We know that the industry is in danger. One very serious concern which the House has to deal with is the free trade talks and various actions which are being taken in the United States by various Congressmen and American industry representatives at the present time. There is also a concern that our own nation is not developing the wherewithal to ensure that we have a strong forest industry in the future. That issue must be addressed.

If nothing else, this emergency debate on forest fires in Atlantic Canada has given us the opportunity to think again about how important our forestry industry is in the country and how necessary it is to have an insurance policy against the fires and also against the other uses which we make of our forests. In other words, we must have a future to continue the industry which is so important to many of us.

**Mr. Pat Binns (Cardigan):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate this evening which was promoted by the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett). The forest