

Let us take a look at some comparative figures that forestry relates to in our trade figures, something I referred to earlier that we will be presenting and dealing with in the legislation when it comes to the committee with some amendments.

Forest products provided a net balance of trade of \$18.3 billion in 1987. Following are comparative figures: Farm products, \$1.4 billion; fisheries products, \$2 billion; energy exports, including natural resources like petroleum and natural gas, \$5.5 billion. Now, that is not to belittle the contribution to the economy of those other resources, but it is to point out just how important our forests are to us. For example, the number of people employed in this industry, the workers who help to produce the wealth so that we can be here today and talk about the generation of tax revenue, dollars and wages that are created. Over 800,000 Canadians are employed in the industry, over 300 communities depend on it for survival. What does that mean in terms of the demands on that resource?

Previous speakers have referred to the Woodridge-Reed report commissioned by the previous government in its time, but pointing out some of the significant demands that there will be on our resource. For example, they calculated all of the particular products that would come from the forest industry, an increase in output of 55 per cent over the next 20-year period. Quebec, for example, ranks highest of all regions in Canada in terms of the value of its forest products output, heavily oriented to pulp and paper.

Not everyone agrees with the outlook that this report provides, but even, Mr. Speaker, if you have what they are suggesting will be the increased demand on our forest resource, you can see that we are going to face incredible demands on our industry and on our resources to provide that demand in the economy.

How are we meeting that? We have talked earlier, as all members have, about the provisions of funding toward the forest department. Is this government really giving this new department the dollars to match its words? I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the work that our committee will do will ensure that that message gets across to the government. We will ensure through our debate, our amendments and our discussions that that message is delivered to the highest levels so that they are aware of how important this legislation is.

Government Orders

One of the chief vehicles for delivering forest services, the administration of forests between the federal and provincial governments, is the Forest Resources Development Agreements. They are critical, I would say, in terms of the contribution of the federal government to forestry between the provinces and the federal government. We have already outlined some of the concerns we have had in this House over the current level of support to those agreements by this government. To date, we are concerned, and I think there is evidence to show that that concern is real. For example, in my own province of British Columbia, there is a request for a new agreement when the current one expires at the end of March of next year.

Right now, despite all comments by the minister and staff, it would appear that negotiations at best are at a snail's pace. This government is placing tremendous effort and value in these new agencies that it has created. For example, the Western Diversification Fund and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. I suggest that what we have ended up with and what has been created is a second level Treasury Board. The major funding decisions that must be made in forestry to renew these agreements is not going to be made by the Minister of Forests. The minister in western Canada for Western Diversification is going to make those decisions. We have called for the Minister of Forests to have that independence to ensure that the minister deals alone with Treasury Board and with cabinet for forestry funding; that it does not have to go through another level. One of the concerns expressed by the forest community is that it is always second rate with this government when it comes to forestry. That is not good enough. That is why we will be moving those amendments in committee to enhance and improve this legislation to give it the clout that we feel it needs.

• (1640)

I do not want to belittle those agreements or carry on with them, but I want members to know just how important they are to the provinces and to work with the different areas of our country to see that forests are reforested. They are critical. I know you know, Mr. Speaker, that we will continue to press in the House to see that those agreements are signed.

What about trade? We have talked already about the forest product shipments and the amount of dollars that they provide to our country and the need, for which we will be bringing in an amendment to the legislation, for a full-time forest trade commissioner to ensure that that