

Government is now the main preoccupation which benefits the economy of the region. However, we cannot build in all parts of Canada a House of Commons and put into place governmental structures to replace the prime resource industries.

We have built roads and gained access to trees wherever they stand in Canada and there is literally no place else to go. That is why all of a sudden there is the realization of an impending crisis in our forests. We can no longer build roads or railways, there is no place else to go and we are experiencing shortages of merchantable timber in every region of Canada. We have now discovered that in the last 50 or 100 years we should have done what other countries have done ever since they began harvesting their forests, that is, farm our forests instead of mining them. That means whenever you cut a tree, either for clearing or selective logging, you take great care to ensure that another tree or two are put in its place. It would not hurt to plant two in case one did not survive.

● (1250)

In 1949 Canadians were acclaimed throughout the world as leaders in the forest sciences. We had established research facilities and recognized, at least up until 1949, that our forests would in the foreseeable future always be our most important industry. That has been restated in this House over the last couple of days.

In 1960 we established a Ministry responsible for forests. As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that was three years after the election of the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker. It was a Conservative Government which felt that forestry is very important and should therefore have a full Department of Government. The forest industry is of a very cyclical nature. We have our ups and downs. Indeed, the Department of Forestry had its ups and downs. The ups continued from 1960 to 1966 when it vastly improved federal-provincial relations. So for those who argue that a federal Ministry of Forestry would be an intrusion in provincial jurisdiction and take away from good relations with the Provinces, quite the opposite was the experience when we had a federal Minister of Forestry between 1960 and 1966. It resulted in the expansion of forest research facilities and a growth in staff to more than 2,000 persons. The top ranking official was a deputy minister. There was a growing awareness throughout the country at that time of the importance of our forestry sector, so 1966 was when we reached a peak in the structural profile of forestry.

Then under the Liberal administration forestry was merged first with rural development. The top official was reduced to an assistant deputy minister. In 1968 forestry was absorbed by Environment Canada. The top official then became a director general and staff reductions began. Forest economic institutes were closed and federal-provincial agreements were phased out. That is from 1968 to 1978, and that is where our problem started. I can show Hon. Members the results because they are here for everyone to see. My colleagues will elaborate on some of the consequences of what emerged as a deliberate policy of ignorance and neglect of this, our most important industrial sector.

Supply

In 1978, as you will recall, Sir, because you were with me here in this House, a federal Minister of the Environment who was to preside over the demise of the Canadian Forestry Service announced that the federal forest laboratories would be privatized. There were more staff cuts, which continued until the total manpower complement of the Canadian Forestry Service was reduced from 2,000 to 1,000 people. In 1979, that ever so brief period of enlightenment when we had another Progressive Conservative Government, we began the painful rebuilding of the Canadian Forestry Service and we started with the reappointment of an assistant deputy minister to serve the Minister of the Environment.

Let me say that I do not think forestry is well placed under the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Caccia). There are entirely too many conflicting interests, responsibilities and jurisdictions in that Department. For instance, if we wanted to begin farming our forests we would have seriously to think about the effective and responsible use of insecticides and pesticides. Would you think for a moment, Mr. Speaker, that we could take chemicals away from agriculture? Well, we cannot take chemicals away from forest farming. But if we want to restore our forests to their former health, we will have to make effective and responsible use of insecticides and pesticides, artificial fertilizers, and all those kinds of things.

Even though it is said that the Minister has some kind of educational background in forestry, his priorities are of course very much on the other side of his responsibility, on the environmental side. He has no time at all even to listen to any of the scientific community who urge him to be very careful in the way he deals with the Provinces and in the manner his Department assesses, regulates and controls the use of chemicals in our forests. So you can see that the Department of the Environment is not a good place for forestry.

The proposition has been advanced that maybe it should be combined with agriculture. Well, there are some very obvious mutual interests between forestry and agriculture and maybe that should be considered. I would commit to you, Mr. Speaker, that when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) decides to give Canadians a chance to choose a new Government, and when a Progressive Conservative Government gets back into power, we will immediately, as a matter of the highest priority, begin where we left off in the process of rebuilding the Canadian Forestry Service. Whether it will be a Ministry on the first day or not, I do not know. Certainly I hope the process will be accelerated and we can get back to the peak we reached in the 1960 to 1966 period where we had a full Minister.

I am becoming rather partial to the idea that a resource Ministry would be ideal because I do not necessarily think that mining is ideally placed with energy. There are a number of conflicting jurisdictions there as well. But the mining sector has a lot in common with the forest sector.

We talk about isolated communities in the north which depend entirely on one industry, be it mining or forestry. We talk about international trade, or about a clearly defined role for research and development which the federal Government