

The Address—Mr. Merrithew

British Columbia. Is it \$660 million a year, jointly split between Ottawa and Victoria, as proposed by UBC? Or is it something less than that? If it is less than that, I would like to know what the Tory promise was about during the election campaign—the promise of a \$1.2 billion five-year rescue program which would provide \$300 million in federal funds per year over five years. I intend to speak to my constituents about those Tory campaign promises, and compare them with what the Minister says in the House.

Outside of that, I am pleased to see that the government side has taken the need for a Ministry of Forestry more seriously than did the Liberals. It is the largest industry in Canada. One Canadian in ten is involved in that industry. However, over the last two decades we have seen less than five cents out of every federal dollar, brought in in terms of federal forestry-industry related taxation, going back to the industry, either for nurseries or for any kind of silviculture-related activity. Under the Tory Government of 1979 that level of expenditure dropped. I would like the Minister to comment on that. It raised alarm among many professional foresters in the country because they did not know in which direction the Tories intended to go during that particular year. More money was spent by the Government of the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) on forestry projects outside Canada than was spent inside Canada. I would like to know if the Minister intends to continue that kind of approach.

The final point which I would like the Minister to respond to is this. If the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is going to create a department of forestry—which I certainly support and I know the Minister supports—why would he take it from the Department of the Environment and put it under the Department of Agriculture? I know it sent a signal to the forest companies that the Tories would take a softer posture in terms of pesticide and herbicide applications. One of the key reasons for permitting forestry to move from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Agriculture is to get rid of environmentalists who are too interested in safety and health and who are opposed to spraying the forests. I would like the Minister to explain why forestry will move from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Agriculture. Why will it not simply remain under the Department of the Environment until such time as a Bill can be introduced to create the Ministry? That was only done once under the Government of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker in 1960. For a very brief period of time Canada had a Ministry of Forestry. However, since 1966 the Department has been downgraded in the number of its staff, its budget and its over-all access to Cabinet funds.

Could the Minister tell us what are the specifics and what he feels is a reasonable and realizable five-year rescue program? We know what was in the Tory campaign handbook, but we do not know what is in his mind. Could he tell us what there is for British Columbia? We were promised during the election campaign that \$300 million a year would be made available. Is that true or is that false? What level of expenditure does the Minister feel is realistic? It is five cents out of a

dollar now. Does he feel it should be raised to 20 cents, 30 cents or 50 cents? I think Canadians would like to know what the signal is. How soon does the Minister anticipate a full ministry and a separate department? Most Canadians who know anything about the industry will support that.

Mr. Merrithew: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the fact that the Hon. Member spoke of his concerns, as have other Members from British Columbia as well as members of all Parties. The platform on which a Party campaigns is not for a one-year period, or a two-month period, but one which covers a five-year mandate. Things can be done and will be done by a government that is concerned about forestry. The Government will spend those dollars as dollars become available. The very fact that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Party saw fit to establish the Ministry of State for Forestry is a very good indication, because it provided for the industry a clear signal that the Government is interested in Canada's largest industry. If nothing else, it will provide to the industry the assurance that someone in Cabinet will be speaking for the industry.

With regard to the mandate which has been given to me as Minister and to the Ministry of State for Forestry, the Prime Minister did what he could under the legislative authority which was before him. At this time there is no legislation in place to establish a full department. Over the intervening years I am sure that the Government will be dealing with such issues as what the Government should be doing for the industry, the kind of organization it should have, and how it can best effect what it wants to do for the industry. That will come in due course. In fact, it is under review at the present time.

The five-year rescue program is one in which I totally believe. I served for two years as the Minister of Forestry and the Minister of Natural Resources in the Province of New Brunswick, as well as serving for six years as the Minister of Commerce and Development. During that time I worked very closely with the forest industry. For once, I think the industry, the Government, labour and all provincial governments realize that perhaps in the past what needed to be done to ensure that there would be a forest industry for our children and our grandchildren was neglected.

The kind of dedication which was expressed in the election campaign and the intentions which we have expressed as to what needs to be done is a realistic goal. The extent to which we will be able to achieve that goal is another matter. Through no fault of our own, we have inherited a fiscal and financial situation that is deplorable, to say the least. However, we will take steps, in conjunction with the provinces, to put into place the programs which are needed.

In the two months I have been Minister I have met with the majority of my provincial counterparts to discuss the kind of programs they desire. I have signed an agreement with the Province of Alberta. As well, last week I signed a \$150 million agreement with the Province of Ontario. In that agreement we attempted to deal with the aims and the needs of the industry in Ontario. The aims and needs of the industry vary from province to province, and we respect the right of the provinces