

*Supply*

● (1600)

**Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** Mr. Speaker, at least once a year in the House we have a debate on Canada's forests. I think it is altogether fitting and proper. As has been said numerous times already today, no resource is more important to the country than our forests.

I will try to make my remarks today along the lines of the two or three speakers who preceded me and stay away from the partisan approach. I believe the forests of Canada are too important for partisan politics. I could pose many questions to the two Members of the Official Opposition who have already spoken, but I will leave it to another time. However, I want to say that it is unfortunate the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) had to refer to the so-called confrontational attitude of the Government of Canada in dealing with the Provinces. Of course that is nothing but an invention of the Tory Party and the Tory provincial Government. No Government in the history of the country has ever been more generous with its tax resources to the Provinces than this Government. In fact, in my Province forestry is more important to the daily livelihood and to the economy of the Province than in any other Canadian Province. Most of the provincial budget comes directly or indirectly from Ottawa. The forests of New Brunswick are noted to be the most productive in Canada. We harvest more wood per acre and we have more acres per capita in our forests than any other Province in Canada. I believe more people in New Brunswick rely on the forests for part or all their livelihood than in any other Province. Yet it has only been in very recent times that any serious effort has been made to ensure that the forests will be regenerated; we still have a very long way to go.

There are companies in New Brunswick that have exploited the forests for generations and until the last two or three years never planted a tree. Now, under the new regime of the Department responsible for natural resources, they are required to take much better care of the forests than they have in the past. We have a lot of room in which to grow in the forest industry, but it is diminishing all the time because of the waste of the past and the waste of the present. Unless we stop the wanton waste of wood fibre, we will not have room for expansion.

This is one of the reasons I believe there should be a Minister of Forestry at the national level in Canada. It is rather strange that we have Ministers of State for almost everything imaginable these days, but we do not have a Minister of Forestry responsible for a predominant industry in Canada which is the largest earner of foreign dollars and our biggest provider of jobs. In fact, Canada sells enough forest products on a yearly basis to offset more than our deficit in auto trade. Those are pretty significant figures. We should have a federal Department of Forestry with a Minister in charge of Forestry at the national level, his Department being a co-ordinating body for research and development, if nothing else.

However, I can understand why there is not one. When there was a federal Ministry of Forestry, co-operation and

co-ordination among various Provinces and the federal Government were not all that great. Some Provinces were jealous that there was a federal Minister of Forestry and indicated quite boldly that there should not be such a Minister at the federal level because forestry was a provincial responsibility. If there is no Minister of Forestry today, it is not just the federal Government which must shoulder the blame. Let us not worry about the blame. Let us continue to lobby for a federal Department and a federal Minister of Forestry which will be the co-ordinator and facilitator of research and development in forestry that we need so much if we are to continue to be the leader in forestry products we have been over the years. That will take some co-operative federalism and some co-operative provincialism.

It would be interesting to know—and I hope in coming months that we will know—what the Tory policy on forestry will be. I look forward to hearing it and debating it. I do not think any Party will be able to go to the Canadian people in the future without a clear policy on an issue as important as forestry.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** You change your policy after an election; that is the trouble.

**Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** We have a prairie forester, a city forester, speaking from his seat because he has nothing to say on his feet.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** There are lots of trees in Saskatoon.

**Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** He is not a bad guy; he just talks too much. A moment ago I spoke about the willful destruction and waste of our forests. I wonder how many additional products there might be and what value they might have if we utilized all the wood harvested in the country. It has only been in very recent times and as a result of an incentive program of the Government of Canada that we have had major forestry plants using their own waste products as hog fuel to cut down on the consumption of other natural resources such as petroleum.

Also it is important to realize that forestry is not only important from the point of view of the money or products obtained from wood fibre. It is important for other reasons as well. To some extent the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich referred to how the land will dry up and turn to desert if there are not the necessary plants to hold in the moisture. Some of the plants have to be sturdy plants like trees. There are other consequences which we have to bear in mind in terms of the destruction of our forests, such as what it does to our lakes, rivers and streams, to the wildlife of the forests and to valuable fish resources which spawn in our water systems. I have no doubt that one of the main reasons for the decline in Atlantic salmon stock is the denuding of the forests of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec where not very many years ago the rivers were rich and teeming with salmon; today they are very scarce indeed. It is not the only reason. Some pretty foolish management policies contributed to that as well. Wanton destruction of those species in the oceanographic feeding