

S.O. 29

The technology centre will be fully operational by June 1, 1986. The centre's efforts will be directed primarily at implementing, within all components of the Quebec forest fire control organization, other conservation societies and the provincial fire co-ordination centre computerized fire management techniques developed by the Petawawa National Forestry Institute. In time, the centre may also serve the needs of other fire management agencies across the country and perhaps, eventually, internationally as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the centre and the technology it will provide would have been very useful to the people of the Maritimes.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned about wildlife. Imagine the distress of wild animals and the irreparable destruction these fires will cause among wildlife in the Maritimes.

Mr. Speaker, I will never forget that when I was a child, there was a forest fire in my community, and things evolved the same as they did in the Maritimes. People got together and developed a very strong sense of community in the face of this disaster, and by working together they managed to control the forest fire, and that is the kind of thing we are still seeing today.

What is unfortunate is that it is impossible to erase this image unless you remove completely what was there before, because a forest fire remains in the minds of people for decades.

Mr. Speaker, my father taught me the importance of the forest when I was very young. I come from a modest family and my father was a farmer. Like all good Quebec farmers, my father worked as a logger during the winter and this was a major source of income for our family. In fact, it helped to pay for our education and little treats. When we were very young, my father taught us the importance of taking care of our forest because it is a national resource which is not inexhaustible.

Mr. Speaker, this stayed in my mind, and during the electoral campaign, even though it can be dangerous to make election promises, I made one in my own constituency, because as you know, the lands in Mirabel were expropriated and these included unique forest where both softwoods and hardwoods were well represented in an area called the *Méandre de la Rivière du Nord*. I said that the forest was important for me and for the people of my constituency who depend on it. Our forests are not that well-known even though they represent a major source of income, but they are slowly dying.

If we look around we can see that reforestation is badly neglected. Now is the time to take action if we want to have lumber to sell in the future. In 1986 I think we can see for ourselves that there has been a collective *laissez-faire* approach, perhaps without our predecessors realizing how important this sector was.

I must say that the Quebec Wood Producers Federation—which you know very well, Mr. Speaker—is made up of aggressive and very articulate people under the aegis of the

Agricultural Producers' Union. They represent private woodlot owners who have decided to get involved and carry out their own applied research. They want to find ways to solve their problems. I had told them we would help, and that is precisely what we did.

In my riding last Friday, Mr. Speaker, I announced a \$60,000 contribution under the farm land development plan set up by the Minister of Public Works (Mr. La Salle) and our Government. I managed to get \$60,000 under this development plan by pointing out that farm development includes forests because all agricultural producers own lands where they fell trees. To me it was important that farm land development benefits private woodlot owners as well.

So they decided to prepare a small leaflet: *Private forest research, action for our survival*. And they will provide us within the next few months with a proposal for the area surrounding the meanders of the Rivière du Nord indicating the type of hardwood there is and what can be done for research. They will determine for instance whether softwood, a fir tree or a birch would grow faster in this and that environment, surrounded by fir trees or pine trees. What conditions make our softwood or our hardwood grow faster?

I am very glad, during tonight's emergency debate, to emphasize just how important our forests are.

I hope therefore that this tragedy which the Maritime provinces are living through today can be used as an example to other Canadian areas in demonstrate for instance to the Western provinces that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and also that they need to take preventive measures to avoid such disasters. As a colleague of mine was saying a while ago, there is no point in casting a stone at the responsible party, now that we must face the facts and find a solution. It is all very nice to say: If only we had avoided doing this or that . . . From now on, we should avoid all "ifs" and have a well established policy to prevent other similar tragedies, because we need to preserve our forests which are part of our national heritage.

We have solutions, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian people . . . We have the required technology, science and will. We need to put together proposals, and I am convinced that we will find ways to help substantially our Maritime taxpayers and fellow citizens. I think also that the federal Government has a responsibility when such tragedies occur because I am not sure that insurance companies would cover such Acts of God, including the losses incurred by a farmer such as those mentioned by the Hon. Member who spoke before me.

• (2300)

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I hope this debate will not only give rise to pious wishes or the expression of views on such a tragedy, but will also ensure that together, collectively, we find solutions to help people in the Maritimes. Looking at what Canadians could do for hungry people in Africa, I feel that