

Copper Supply for Canadian Use

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, with this announcement the minister gives an example of the power of the government when it chooses to exercise its power. There is no question that there is more than just a veiled threat contained in his statement. He intends business. He intends that no copper shortage will develop in this country. He is insisting that the industry act in the best interests of Canada, and in this case to ensure that a supply is maintained.

• (2:10 p.m.)

This has not always been the case. There have been instances in which this country, one of the major producers of copper and nickel, has faced severe shortages while the raw material was being exported to the markets of the world. This was an intolerable situation which should not have been allowed to continue.

There are other points which are not answered in this statement. I hope the minister will be frank with us and state what kind of rebuffs he received from the industry. He obviously would not be taking this action unless there had been an indication that the industry was not prepared to co-operate.

We should also know the extent to which representation has been made to the Canadian government by North American users of copper, particularly in the United States. I hope there will be a frank reply from the minister in this regard.

The shortage of copper internationally gives Canadians a lever that we should use. In the past we have been critical of the fact that we have been little more than hewers of wood and drawers of water, to the detriment of our secondary industry. Now that there is a shortage it should be made clear that the top priority for our raw materials should go to manufacturers within Canada.

The minister may have to go beyond some of the things contained in this statement and consider an export marketing board perhaps comparable to our Wheat Board, so that our raw materials will be marketed through a board rather than through private companies in order to ensure that we have the maximum use of our own resources for the future development of secondary industry in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): First of all, I wish to thank the minister who has kindly sent me a copy in French of the statement he has just made in the house.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

He has just announced that due to a serious shortage of copper throughout the world at the present time, prices have risen markedly on the London metal exchange. He has also said that Canadian producers are interested in exporting to that market as they can get better prices there than in North America.

Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, this is the first time that we are faced with a copper shortage in peacetime, and the minister has made three suggestions to deal with the problem.

The first would be to withdraw export permits for refinery shapes.

Mr. Speaker, if war broke out tomorrow morning, I do not think the minister would have to use the first solution. He would rather ask for the discovery and operation of new mines to produce the copper needed.

Instead of withholding or withdrawing export permits, the minister should, in co-operation with his colleague the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), promote prospecting if there are not enough mines. In fact, the minister could visit my riding where I could show him many good spots for copper mining. If that metal is really in short supply in the country and in the world, I think a good way to fight present unemployment conditions would be to open new mines and give jobs to the unemployed.

That is why I think that instead of restricting these export permits for mining companies getting a better price somewhere else, some new mines should be developed in order to increase production of this much sought after mineral.

[English]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

LUMBER AND PLYWOOD—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO STABILIZE PRICING

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the government has been following closely recent developments in the building materials market in Canada and has taken particular note of the increasing cost of lumber and plywood. The price of lumber and plywood has responded to increased demand in the domestic and export markets during a period when weather conditions prevented the industry from maintaining an adequate supply of basic materials.

I have examined log exports, which have been under control by the authority granted under the Export and Import Permits Act