

Adjournment Debate

with the means to have them recognized in their daily lives, because their political representatives here have willingly agreed to transfer part of their powers to Canadian courts, so that people must now have easy and inexpensive access to these courts.

Hon. Serge Joyal (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, if this issue had not been raised by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), I should probably have raised it myself outside the House. Not that it is not in my view one of the most important elements of linguistic minorities, rights which have been guaranteed by the Constitutional reform last spring, but because in a just and democratic society, it is only normal and legitimate that the majority should facilitate court access to the individuals and minorities whose basic rights are being jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind you, if I may, that the request the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier made yesterday and is making again today is not exceptional. There have been several cases in our country where the Canadian government has provided financial assistance to individuals and groups who sought to challenge provincial or even federal legislations in court. I would remind them, for instance, that the Canadian Expropriation Act reimburses a plaintiff if he wins his case. The same applies to the Canada Pension Plan. The legal department does the same for veterans' pensions. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs finances individuals or groups under certain conditions when it is in the interest of the consumer. The Department of Justice and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs financed famous cases in the past, especially within the context of the James Bay project in Quebec, where the plaintiffs were awarded high legal costs. There is therefore nothing new in the request made this evening by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier. He is right to point out that we have had since 1978 a program available to all Canadians and which was used effectively in Manitoba and Quebec to help financially those with claims under sections 93 and 133 to go before the courts.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I share wholeheartedly the concerns expressed by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier, and I can tell him that I hope I will be in a position by the end of the year to inform the House that a financial backing in support of Section 23 of the constitutional Act of 1981 will be brought about.

● (2220)

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT REVIEW AGENCY—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION ON SALE OF CROWN ZELLERBACH COMPANY

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to cover a rather complicated subject quickly. It relates to the question I put yesterday in the House to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Lumley).

The Government of Canada sees itself as supporting the forest industry in this country by subsidizing or providing

incentives for house building. I think the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) perhaps overestimated it in his remarks when he said that two sawmills could cut sufficient lumber to provide for the housing needs of Canada. In fact, even then, the forest industry of British Columbia would still be at a complete standstill. I think the answer given by the Minister yesterday and the program put forward by the Prime Minister indicate a great depth of ignorance about the present situation in the forest industry in Canada.

I should like to point out several factors Mr. Speaker. First of all, there has been an abandonment of Canada by major U.S. forest companies which formerly had operations in this country. Rayonier of Canada has left. It sold its assets to Western Forest Products. International Paper has left. It sold its assets to Canadian Pacific Investments. Before us today is the prospect of Crown Zellerbach of Canada being sold to a New Zealand firm and, in fact, the parent company retrenching in the United States.

The interesting aspect of all those sales is that the firms left with one thing, and undoubtedly Crown Zellerbach will leave with this also; that is, a contract for the parent company, now an international competitor and no longer an operator in Canada. Those companies will have the responsibility for the international marketing of Canadian forest products. This is a disaster, Mr. Speaker, because our foreign competitors in the United States, which will no longer have an interest in Canada, will be responsible for selling Canadian forest products. This involves three major corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Another aspect of the forest industry is the fact that MacMillan Bloedel was recently the subject of a takeover by the Noranda Corporation. There is a persistent rumour that MacMillan Bloedel will be integrated, division by division, into the Noranda Corporation and that the corporate structure of that major forest producer, one of the strongest in the world with a major international marketing capability controlled by Canadians, will be broken. The integrity of that corporate structure will be broken and the efficiency lost to the Canadian international forest marketing effort. The disappearance of those four companies from the Canadian scene, taking with them their international marketing capability, would spell disaster, Mr. Speaker.

There is a question about why this is happening, Mr. Speaker. I should like to put forward three short ideas before the Parliamentary Secretary enlightens us on what the Canadian Government intends to do about this great structural problem other than the incentive.

The first question is why these companies would leave. I suggest it is because the forest industry and the forest resource in Canada has been treated like a mine and high-graded. What we are left with is the remnants in an impaired condition.

Over the years we have seen the alienation of a great deal of forest land and, I would say, the depletion of the capability, in many areas, of the forest soil as a result of poor management. In Canada the regeneration of the forest is an 80-year cycle