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to have the dignity of a pay cheque, to know that the sweat of his brow went into earning that pay cheque so that he could maintain his family. That was important to him. Sure there was a social agency that would have looked after him had he stayed at home, but he always travelled and he usually went out West. He told me that this was the first year that he had travelled and come up empty handed. He could not find a job. It was not good enough for him that he could go home and have someone look after him. What was involved for that gentleman was the dignity of a job and the self-esteem and sense of worth that comes with work.

Once in a while, all of us need to be reminded of what we mean when we talk about the unemployed. Even though I live in a district which has unemployment that is much too high, and even though it is probably a terrible admission for an Hon. Member who comes from an area with high unemployment, as I left that community and drove away, I had a new sense of urgency, which had been personalized by an individual, about the ugly side of unemployment and how shattering it is.

● (2140)

I urge the Government and all Hon. Members to try to find the seeds for something good within the disaster we have just experienced and are still experiencing. At the present time seven fires are out of control in my province. I ask them to respond to that disaster by more than just words, as all of us have expressed, admiring the heroics of the people who fought the fires. They should ask for more than support, help, and empathy for those people who lost property. Property has been lost in Newfoundland as well. They should look upon this as an opportunity to put the gentleman in Lark Harbour back to work. He wants to work. He wants the dignity of a job. He wants to know that he is investing in his province. I urge them to put him back to work and to build upon our forestry resource.

Those are my comments. I hope Hon. Members of the House can take that idea and run with it. I hope it can be our contribution of gray matter as Members, as humble as it might be, to a solution to unemployment in a hard-pressed region which dedicates some resources as an investment in the future. I hope tonight will be the beginning of a regional approach by Members of Parliament, irrespective of party colour, so that we will do in the final analysis what we were sent here to do, that is, represent the interest of our constituents and make a contribution to Canada at the same time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morrissey Johnson (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, my first duty, as I rise to speak this evening, is to thank the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett) for seeking this opportunity to debate the devastating forest fires which have ravaged the Atlantic provinces for the past several days. Also, I should like to congratulate all Hon. Members who have spoken previously in this debate. I especially congratulate the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—

St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). In fact, he very eloquently described the situation as it pertains to Newfoundland. As a result, he somewhat lessened the time that I will take this evening to speak a little about what has occurred in terms of the forest fires in Newfoundland.

Most generally when we speak of industries in Newfoundland, everyone automatically thinks of the fishing industry. The fact is that the forest industry is equally as vital to our provincial economy as is the fishery. In 1984, the forestry processing sector accounted for about 25 per cent of all manufacturing employment and income in Newfoundland. I suppose we have about the same amount of gross national provincial product from the fishery and slightly more from mining, so we see how important the forestry industry is to Newfoundland.

Over the past several days Newfoundland, like the other Atlantic provinces, has been severely hit by numerous fires. I believe at the present time there are somewhere in the vicinity of 13 fires still burning in Newfoundland, seven of which are out of control. This evening I checked with the Hon. Leonard Simms, Minister of Forest Resources and Lands for Newfoundland, and was appraised of the situation to date. At this time it is difficult for anyone to ascertain exactly how much merchandisable forest has been destroyed. Many of the fires have burned over bog lands, and it is almost impossible to ascertain how many trees have been destroyed.

I wish I were able to be as happy this evening as I was slightly more than a month ago when I was in Newfoundland and had an opportunity to witness the signing of a forestry agreement between the federal and provincial Governments. At that time I was enthusiastic about this year's reforestation program in which approximately \$12 million will be put into forestry activities. I am sure there was no one present then who anticipated the big losses which have now occurred as a result of the forest fires. This year forest fires are approximately three weeks or more ahead of what they would be in normal weather conditions in Newfoundland. This is mainly because we had a low winter snowfall and windy spring weather with record-breaking temperatures. The land or the forest floor has dried out earlier than usual.

As the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe stated, up to this point in time approximately 1,300 square kilometres has been burned over. Not only has there been damage to trees and so on, but there has been also some personal property damage. I believe two homes were destroyed around the Grand Falls area. Also in that same vicinity I believe 31 summer cabins, a warehouse and an unoccupied residence were destroyed. As well, two provincial parks have been damaged.

There was a time just last week, on Saturday, when fire caused damage to transmission lines in the Bay D'Espoir area, resulting in power outages all over the eastern part of Newfoundland. Several communities had to be evacuated, and of course some were put on evacuation alert. As I said earlier,