

and because we have the best benefit packages of any forest industry in the world.

There has been so much talk, Mr. Speaker, that high wages and benefits will suffer under the Free Trade Agreement. In the forest industry the experience has been the opposite. As it has traded more and more with the United States, it has become more competitive, and wages and benefits have become better, not worse. In fact, I believe that this is the experience across Canada.

● (1440)

As we have reduced our tariffs with the United States over the past 50 years, our standard of living has gone up, not down. Reducing tariffs has resulted in increased trade. Wages and social programs have benefited. Why should this trend change? It definitely will not change. Free trade will not destroy our social programs. On the contrary, it will make it possible for us to improve them.

Although securing the existing U.S. market and protecting current jobs is the primary motivation for the forest industry, it also recognizes that the Free Trade Agreement will provide new opportunities for value-added processing. There is no doubt that over the years we will see many new plants and jobs in this area.

However, there is a more immediate opportunity for secondary industry. That will be the creation of businesses based on the experience and creativity of our own people. In spite of the fact that the forest industry in the interior of British Columbia is the best in the world at producing lumber, much of the equipment and technology comes from other parts of the world, for example, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Washington, Oregon, and California. This does not have to be. We have the people, the experience, the knowledge, and the ideas.

Many small companies in the Cariboo have struggled to establish themselves. They may be small, some companies with 10, 20 or 50 employees, but they are very important to us. They represent our opportunity for growth. They represent our future. These are Main Street Canadians from the Cariboo. They want to compete. They are confident in their abilities and are looking forward to the future.

For example, Brigden Manufacturing is a company with a unique design for a log grapple and arch which allows multiple use of the crawler tractor. It is a small company just beginning, but it has potential.

Bradeco Fab and Welding is a company with an innovative cutting head for automatic falling of trees. It

is lighter, less complex, and requires less maintenance than the traditional cutting head. It has been under way for six months and currently has eight employees. It has recently received three new contracts with the United States and Oregon, and the potential is definitely there.

Exco Manufacturing is a small company that has been growing rapidly over three years. It started off producing automatic lumber and log handling systems for the sawmills. Currently it has 65 employees, and the potential is to triple that number of employees in the next four years.

Those companies all started producing for local requirements. Invariably they discovered that there was a very large market just to the south. It is the U.S. market that will produce the incentive for new growth. We need all of these companies. In fact, we should have many more. There is a real opportunity for Canada to become a world leader in development of forest industry technology and equipment. We, the Members of the House, must encourage industry to grasp the opportunity and make it happen.

There are other opportunities for my riding provided by the Free Trade Agreement. For example, totally new secondary industries assembling or manufacturing products for the U.S. market. The investors may be Canadian, but it is very possible that we will attract new investors from the Pacific Rim and Europe. It is curious that these offshore investors recognize the opportunities of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement better than many Canadians. We do not care where the investors come from. We desperately need the jobs, and we hope to have some of those jobs in the Cariboo.

A respected British Columbia Senator, George Van Roggen, was chairman of the committee conducting hearings across Canada on the Free Trade Agreement. He said: "If B.C. wants the prosperity that they enjoy in central Canada then B.C. must have the same secondary industry they have in central Canada. This is only possible under the Free Trade Agreement".

For the people in British Columbia, for the people in western Canada, for all of the people in Canada who live in areas outside the industrial belt of central Canada, we can finally say that it is our turn for fairness in economic opportunity.

I accepted the concept of the Free Trade Agreement very naturally. To me it was something whose time had come. In the same manner as a young person must eventually leave home and find his or her own way in the world, so must Canada find its way with all the