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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

WE MUST USE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY BALANCED WAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MORAN of Kansas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, the forest fires in Los Alamos and Nevada have highlighted what may have become a much bigger problem. One of the subcommittees on which I serve is the Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health of the Committee on Resources.

We heard testimony a few months ago that almost 40 million acres of Federal land out West was in imminent danger of catastrophic forest fires. This is because environmental extremists fanatically, sometimes even violently, oppose cutting any trees in our national forests.

Forestry experts tell us that we have to cut some trees to have healthy forests, yet some of these extremists oppose even the removal of dead and dying trees, thus causing huge fuel buildups on the floors of these forests, leading to forest fires.

The Los Alamos fire was a so-called controlled burn set by Federal bureaucrats that simply got out of control. Of course, we all know that no Federal bureaucrat has ever made a mistake, or at least one that they have been held accountable for.

The leading environmental extremist, Secretary Babbitt, said on television last week that our forests are now 100 times more dangerous than they were 100 years ago, but it is because of the very policies that he has been advocating. If we do not start cutting more trees in the national forests soon, then in the very near future we are going to see forest fires that make the Los Alamos disaster look like peanuts in comparison.

Yet some of these environmental extremists want the forests to be thinned only by forest fires because that is the "natural way," and the way it occurred before man started populating the Earth, and, according to the extremists, messed things up.

Last year in the subcommittee we were told that the Congress in the mid 1980s passed what was then proclaimed as a great pro-environment law that we would not allow cutting of more than 80 percent of the new growth in the national forests. Since then, we have repeatedly reduced that percentage, stopping it altogether in some places. From the pro-environment law of 80 percent 15 or 16 years ago, we now allow harvesting of less than one-seventh of the new growth in our national forests.

National forests have about 23 billion board feet of new growth each year. Today we cut less than 3 billion board feet, or only about 12 or 13 percent of the new growth. There are about 6 billion board feet of dead or dying trees in the national forests, yet these extremists will not even permit the removal of these dead trees.

Now we are cutting less than half of the dead and dying trees, and unbelievably, some people want it stopped alto-

gether. Environmental extremists have had such an impact that many schoolchildren have almost been brainwashed about these things. They never hear the other side. If I went to any school in Knoxville and told them I was against cutting any trees in the national forests, they would probably think that was a really good thing. They never stop to think that we have to cut trees if we want to build houses or furniture, or have books, newspapers, toilet paper, and many, many other products.

Also, if we keep limiting and restricting where and how trees are cut, it will drive the prices for homes and many other items much higher than they already are. Even now, lumber dealers tell me they are having to import all kinds of Canadian lumber because we have cut out or halted so much U.S. lumber production.

When extremists get our lumber production in our national forests reduced so drastically, it helps big businesses and other countries, but it destroys jobs and drives up prices in this country. The people it hurts the most are the lower-income and working people in this country.

I know most of these environmental extremists come from very wealthy families, and I know they are more or less insulated from the harm that they do. But I think it is really sad that they destroy so many jobs and drive up prices for so many people who really cannot afford it.

I am not talking about cutting any trees in our 356 national parks, I am talking about cutting trees in our national forests so they can grow and be healthy and keep lumber prices down.

Our national forests cover 191 million acres. I know when people look at a map of the United States on one page in the book, the country looks small. Yet, 191 million acres is equal to about 325 Great Smoky Mountain National Parks. Most people who go to the Great

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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