

ing our Global Future", was very disappointing. The government does not seem to have a grasp of the urgency of the international debt problem and the link to the rain forests.

The second reason I am not very optimistic is because recently, just this past Tuesday in fact, the government's green plan has come out and we see once again a sort of inability on the part of the government to understand the urgency of linking the global environment to our own security. I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by asking those people who are out there, those Canadians who care about the global environment, to get in touch with your member of Parliament and make sure that he or she is aware of Canada's role in the destruction of rain forests and tell them to stop.

• (1740)

**Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon. I would like to express appreciation to my colleague, who lives in Ottawa, who has graciously permitted me to speak first so that I can depart this lovely community for an even lovelier part of Canada, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the initiative of the hon. member for Northumberland in raising one of the most serious and urgent issues on the public agenda for consideration by this House. No subject is more Canadian than forests and no place is more appropriate for the discussion of forest issues than the Parliament of Canada.

The member's concern is well founded. We depend on forests, perhaps in more ways than we have yet learned to count, not just as a source of product and jobs, although these considerations are of vital importance to Canadians. Forests are, as we have rather belatedly come to see, a vital and vulnerable part of the life support system that allows us to exist on this planet. All around the world, trees meet human needs for lumber, paper, food, and medicine; they shelter our fields and homes; they yield fodder for our livestock; they will fuel the fires to cook half of the world's meals today; and, beyond this, awareness has finally dawned that forests are active players in the very process of life. They hold back

deserts, they stabilize hillsides, they regulate run-off, clean the air, and shelter countless life forms.

So I share the member's concern because the global forest is under assault and it is in jeopardy. Once it covered most of the planet, now less than a third of the earth is forested. Recent statistics from the food and agricultural organization of the United Nations indicate that the problem is even worse than we thought. Figures announced by the food and agricultural organization in June suggest that the rate of tropical deforestation actually rose by about 70 per cent during the 1980s to the point where some 17 million hectares of tropical forests are being lost every year. Half of Africa's forests are already gone. Much of Central America grows more barren every day. In China and in India, one-third of the world's population puts immense pressure on just one-twentieth of the world's trees.

Can the process be stopped? The evidence up to now is discouraging. We have failed for centuries to replace the trees we use because of short-term thinking, lack of vision, and wrong-headed attitudes. Quite literally, we haven't been able to see the forest for the trees.

But the process has to be stopped or we will degrade our planet and impoverish our children's future. The answer, the solution to deforestation is complex and it is difficult. It has many facets and it will take a lot of effort on many fronts.

Key parts of the answer lie in other areas seemingly unconnected with forestry. Most fundamental, for example, we need to bring the population explosion under control because even a perfect forest program, world-wide, cannot cope with exponential population growth. Experience reveals to us that the only sure way to lower birth rates is to overcome poverty. So the first step in protecting the world's forests is through broad, generalized development programs in such fields as health, food, education, and job creation, with the bulk of the benefits going to the poorest people.

The environmental movement can make a big contribution by helping us to become responsible consumers. The forestry profession which is going through a revolution in its thinking needs to explore and develop whole new areas such as agriforestry and social forestry so that it can make an even more profound contribution. But the member for Northumberland is right in believing there is legislation or regulatory aspect to the solution which means a role that governments, parliamentarians,