

I also mentioned the decreasing size of the caribou herd. The caribou that live on our territories are accustomed to living in the woods. Before the planes began to carry out their manoeuvres over our territory, we used to take between 150 and 200 on average every winter. Two years ago, we only got six. The two years before that, we got seventy. The caribou have now moved further west and further east. There are not any more under the flight path. It is a big problem.⁽³⁹⁾

There is no greater threat to wildlife than habitat destruction yet animal rights advocates suggest that native people should replace their more traditional, economic activities with those of a civilized western society. Ms. Esther Klein, the past President of the Animal Defence League, supports the following options which she quoted from a *Globe and Mail* newspaper article:

Today native business is manufacturing, financial institutions and communications, sophisticated fishing fleets and processing plants, forest products, large-scale agricultural operations, mining, oil and natural gas, real estate development, construction, shopping centres and office buildings, tourist facilities, airlines and freight carriers.⁽⁴⁰⁾

It would appear that the majority of these activities require the alteration and possible destruction of wildlife habitat. The suggestion by animal rights organizations that aboriginal people should abandon their tradition of living in harmony with nature and replace it with a lifestyle which can result in the destruction of habitat, supports the following comment by Mr. Stephen Hazell of the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

As I was saying earlier, the animal rights groups are the sheep in wolves' clothing [wolves in sheep's clothing] with respect to conservation. They like to wear the clothing of conservationism in order to pursue their own goals. If the Canadian public understood clearly that animal rights principles were in fact conflicting with the environmental movement, then I think they would have much less support.⁽⁴¹⁾

In contrast to the animal rights viewpoint, Mr. Hazell suggests that in fact, trapping and the fur industry itself may provide the key to conserving Canada's wildlife and habitat.

So it is a bit paradoxical, but nonetheless it is true that by and large trapping helps to ensure that furbearer species survive, because there is an economic incentive for those trappers and for the fur trade to ensure that populations of furbearers are optimal. However, if pelt prices decline because of some anti-fur campaign, trappers will be driven off the land and the result will be that there is no longer an economic reason to conserve these species. If people cannot make any money at it at all, why bother saving the species?

So my conclusion from all of this would be that without such economic forces, and without trappers on the land, it becomes a lot easier for industrial interests such as forest companies or mining and oil and gas corporations to despoil and destroy even more wildlife habitat than previously....

If we are to protect wildlife habitat, wildlife must become more economically valuable. However, I think everyone recognizes that as a use of land, wildlife habitat always loses, or almost always. It loses to agricultural uses, it loses to urban and industrial uses, because more profits can be earned using land for these latter activities. So to conserve wildlife habitat - and I am talking about furbearer habitat as well - we must increase the economic value of wild land uses. And I put it to you that this would be extremely difficult if wildlife, such as furbearers, have little or no economic value.⁽⁴²⁾

The Committee agrees that the more people depend upon animals the more interest they will take in ensuring that animals continue to share the planet with them. The Committee believes that this places an obligation on us to improve the conditions of animals but not to reject their use.