

Adjournment Debate

I want to take this opportunity again to urge the Government of Canada to support the concept of a biosphere reserve which has been proposed by the Penan Association. They note that the Penan have been careful stewards of the forest. They are dependent on the forest for food, medicine, building materials, water sources and spiritual well-being. The Penan rain forests are some of the richest on earth. They contain more plant species than any other and unique animal species.

Logging is destroying the Penan forest faster than any other area of commercial logging in the world. Therefore, they have called, and they are acting on behalf of all of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak, for the establishment of a biosphere reserve to protect Sarawak's last remaining primary forest, its unique wildlife and the Penan's right to their traditional way of life. I support this call and I hope that the Government of Canada will support this call as well.

As well, I want to pay tribute to the many Canadian organizations and individuals, including the Environmental Youth Alliance, the Wild Project of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Cultural Survival Canada and many others that have been in the forefront of the struggle for safeguarding this precious ecological heritage of this planet.

Anderson Mutang Urud is free. But, as David Suzuki, one of Canada's foremost ecologists has said: "if we can't save even a tiny remnant of the world's most ancient rain forest as a homeland for one of the world's only remaining hunter-gatherer tribes, there isn't much hope for the rain forest elsewhere or for any of us".

We must act, Mr. Speaker, on the plea of the Penan people for their survival.

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for Science): The main issues here, Mr. Speaker, are the environmental and social concerns stemming from the depletion of the tropical rain forest in the state of Sarawak, Malaysia, as a consequence of logging, commercial agricultural use, subsistence farming and hydro-electric development.

The Canadian government is deeply concerned about the wave of deforestation in southeast Asia. The issue is very complicated as it involves not only environment, human rights and native peoples, but also Malaysian federal-state relations, Canada-Malaysia bilateral rela-

tions and Malaysian sensitivity to any outside interference, especially from western countries.

The government does not believe that logging should be banned in Malaysia. Nor do we think that a ban on importation of Malaysian timber would be appropriate or effective, not to mention the fact that it would be contrary to our obligations under GATT. Rather, we believe that the ecological and economic values of forests must be carefully balanced through sustainable forestry management. Canada is taking a positive approach through its development assistance programs and through participation in international organizations such as the Tropical Forest Action Plan, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Canada is the third largest bilateral donor for international forestry activities under Tropical Forest Action Plan and the largest per capita donor. This government is very aware of the hardships encountered by indigenous peoples, including the Penan as they are exposed to global economic forces. The Sarawak Agricultural Development Plan, a multidisciplinary agricultural planning activity, is a major Canadian project which will have significant benefits for all farmers in the region, including the native people.

On February 5, Mr. Anderson Mutang Urud, a prominent Malaysian anti-logging activist, was arrested in Sarawak under emergency ordinance powers for questioning. He appeared in court on March 5 and pleaded not guilty to the charges. He was then released on bail with a trial date set for September 21. We have no reason to believe that Mr. Urud was detained in connection with the activities related to the recent visit of the member for Burnaby-Kingsway to Malaysia in January.

Our officials will continue to monitor the situation as it develops.

Clearly, Canada is actively involved in assisting Malaysia and other countries to improve forestry management practices in the pursuit of sustainable development.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 6.25 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.25 p.m.