

to under 200,000 today. The reckless destruction of people's homeland is not only environmentally irresponsible. It also violates the International Bill of Rights.

Rain forests are being destroyed for a variety of economic reasons, but often these economic reasons are supported by inappropriate government policies. Canada itself is a culprit of that. Many of the so-called development projects, for example, that have been located in tropical rain forests have been environmental disasters and social tragedies. For example, the Balbina Dam in Brazil flooded 2,400 square kilometres of pristine tropical rain forests and forced one-third of the Waimiri-Atroari Indians from their homeland. Yet not one kilowatt of electricity will be generated from this dam because surveying errors have made it impossible to fill the reservoir with sufficient water.

There are many ways that Canada can improve the record. We are a member of the World Bank and other multilateral development banks which finance so many of the development projects that destroy tropical rain forests. We must bear responsibility for the global problem as it exists. We could have policies that would prevent us from importing into this country tropical hardwoods, for example. Austria is one country in the world that has such policies in place. Australia is considering such a policy.

In other countries at other levels of government, municipalities for example, are putting in place by-laws prohibiting the use of lumber in government contracts. In West Germany, 30 local councils as well as the West German government have voted to stop using rain forest lumber. Forty per cent of Holland's municipalities has the same by-laws in place.

It is important when Canada contributes to development projects internationally that environmental assessments are done prior to funding being put out in support of projects. This should be a factor in all of our CIDA funded projects, but it should also be a factor in the development banks that are supported with funding from Canada.

There are many different areas and policies at which Canada can look. I think it is important that Canada call together a conference of environmental NGOs that would work with bureaucrats and politicians to work out

government policies here in Canada which would lead to the preservation of tropical rain forests instead of their destruction.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, this is not simply for the survival of native peoples in Third World countries who must have a voice in the kinds of projects that are supported and take place in their countries. It is also for the benefit and welfare of Canadian citizens as well as other global citizens.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charles-Eugène Marin (Gaspé):** Mr. Speaker, the question of tropical rainforests brought to our attention by the hon. member for Northumberland is a crucial one that has concerned the Government of Canada for some time. Of the numerous threats to our environment, the degradation and destruction of rainforests is the one that has received the most attention by the international community because of its global scope.

Mr. Speaker, forests cover almost one third of emerged land and they support life to a great extent on our planet. They provide humanity with building materials, food, fodder, numerous medicinal plants and, most importantly wood for cooking and heating.

Forests also play an essential role in the environment: they protect soil from wind and water erosion; they reduce flooding risks by absorbing excess water; they purify the air by producing oxygen; they absorb humidity; and they provide shelter for humans and animals.

• (1720)

The consequences of the increasing elimination of the forest cover are very serious. The ground erosion causes a decrease in soil productivity; the loss of firewood sources reduces energy supplies; the threat of extinction of about half of the vegetal and animal species, including several medicinal strains, leads to a reduction of the genetic make-up. The tree loss reduces the forest's capacity to temper the planet's climate by recycling moisture, thus producing a climatic change.

While it is a global phenomenon, Mr. Speaker, the situation is even worse in the tropics where economic and demographic pressures are compelling the people to develop and transform forest areas in order to use them for mainly farming, domestic and commercial purposes. These abusive practices are impeding sustainable devel-