

Ecologists, Indigenous Groups Oppose World Bank Policies

An international coalition of indigenous peoples support groups and environmental organizations met in Washington, D.C., from September 28 to 30 to oppose World Bank lending policies. The meeting, called "The Citizens' Conference on Tropical Forests, Indigenous People, and the World Bank," was timed to coincide with the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The World Bank is the largest financier of development projects in the world.

The alternative conference set the stage for an international campaign to pressure the World Bank to institute stronger measures to protect both the natural environment and the right of indigenous people to retain their land and way of life. "The Fatal Five" development projects were identified as targets of the campaign. They include Polonoroeste, a road-building and colonization project in the Brazilian Amazon; the Narmada Valley Dam project in India, which will require the relocation of two million people; transmigration in Indonesia, the largest resettlement plan in the world; a beef export project in Botswana, southern Africa; and the Three Gorges Dam project in China.

The need for environmental organizations in the industrialized nations to work more closely with Indians, peasants, and others in the Third World who live in areas affected by World Bank projects was a recurring theme at the conference. Ailton Krenak of the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) in Brazil and ecologist José Lutzenberger demonstrated the type of actions which will be taken to oppose World Bank projects with the announcement of the formation of the Amazonian Alliance of the People of the Rainforest. The group will unite Indians, rubber trappers, river dwellers, and landless people to confront challenges to their survival in the Amazon.

SAIIC coordinator Nilo Cayuqueo was featured with Ailton and two representatives from Survival International on a panel which denounced the effects of World Bank projects on indigenous people. Other participants in the conference included activists from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Kenya, England, and the United States, including Hawaii. The conference was co-sponsored by the Anthropology Resource Center, Cultural Survival, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Environmental Policy Institute, the National Audubon Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Rainforest Action Network, and Survival International. (For a report on an earlier meeting of the organizations, see *SAIIC Newsletter*, Winter, 1986. p. 17.)

The World Bank will provide about \$15 billion in new loans for development projects in the coming year. The Bank receives its funds from industrialized nations in North America, Europe, and Asia. The United States contributes about 20 percent of the capital of the Bank.

