The importance of acid rain in Canada-U.S. relations is also demonstrated by the attention it received during the visit of President Reagan to Ottawa in March. It was among the major bilateral issues discussed. I can assure you that Canada was pleased to receive the President's assurances that negotiation of an agreement to deal with the problem would proceed as planned, and that the United States wants to work co-operatively with Canada to understand and control air as well as water pollution. We regard this as an important commitment by the United States government.

The United States' commitment to commence negotiations in June in accordance with a Memorandum of Intent was reiterated just last week by a senior State Department official. In short, we intend to press on.

Aims of Memorandum of Intent

Our ultimate hope, of course, is in the successful conclusion of a bilateral air quality agreement. In that connection, our two countries signed a Memorandum of Intent in August of last year which enunciated three quite specific objectives.

The first is to commit our countries to begin negotiations on such an air quality agreement in June 1981 – only a month from now.

Secondly, the Memorandum of Intent provided for the establishment of five joint Canada-United States working groups, charged with developing a common information base. The first reports of these groups – although interim and preliminary – show clearly that our concerns about acid rain were not misplaced, that it is a genuine and serious problem.

Thirdly, the Memorandum of Intent calls on both Canada and the United States to undertake interim measures of control to reduce transboundary air pollution, pending the conclusion of a bilateral agreement. As I elaborated earlier, Canada has already implemented a number of such control measures and is anticipating some palpable reciprocation by the United States.

It has been said that acid rain constitutes a test of the rule of law in the relationship between Canada and the United States. The legal principles involved are clear. Both our governments support Principle 21 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration which provides that states have "the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction".

With regard to boundary waters, this principle has been embodied in our bilateral treaty obligations for more than 70 years. The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 prohibits the pollution of waters on either side of the boundary "to the injury of health or property on the other". This was the basic principle applied in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972 – an agreement which must inevitably be of particular significance to both Americans in this region and to Canadians in the "Golden Horseshoe" on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario.

Obligations are mutual

It was an international arbitration in the 1930s between Canada and the United States that provided what is still the clearest statement of the international law relating to