

ACID RAIN

Acid rain has become an important issue in Canada and the United States. Because it involves the transport of pollutants over long distances, it is also an important problem between the two countries. A Memorandum of Intent signed by Canada and U.S. in August 1980 recognizes the seriousness of the problem. It commits both Governments to negotiate a cooperative agreement, and to take some important actions in the interim.

Concern about acid rain has grown with the emergence of scientific information which indicates it is having a seriously detrimental effect, especially in central and eastern North America. The acidification of lakes and associated loss of fish has been documented in North America and in Scandinavia, where the process is more advanced. It hastens the corrosion of buildings and structures, and may also reduce forest and soil productivity and may indirectly affect human health.

The Canadian Government has called acid rain its number one environmental problem, and a high priority issue for resolution with the United States. Environment Minister John Roberts has stated that enough is known about the problem to begin taking corrective action now, while research continues. Canada has begun taking such action. In September 1980, the Ontario Government increased controls in the INCO smelting operation at Sudbury, Canada's main source of acid causing pollutants. In January 1981, it announced emission limits on Ontario Hydro's thermal power plants, another significant source of these pollutants. In December 1980, the Canadian Parliament unanimously amended the Canadian Clean Air Act to provide clear authority to regulate the sources of air pollutants endangering health, safety or welfare in the United States, on a reciprocal basis.

The legislative branches of both countries have called for action. A 1978 Congressional Resolution was the first formal call for negotiation of a bilateral agreement. In 1980, a Canadian Parliamentary Sub Committee on Acid Rain met with members of Congress in Washington. Ninety Congressmen subsequently signed a letter to the Committee pledging support in finding solutions to the acid rain problem.

Canadian action to begin dealing with acid rain has been taken in the expectation of appropriate action also being taken in the United States. Emissions from U.S. sources, largely thermal power generation in the Ohio Valley and other industrialized regions, are large contributors to acid rain in Canada. Without U.S. reduction