

Supply

to this highly complex and difficult environmental problem. That impact would have been denied us if we, and I in particular, had mounted a campaign in the United States or in Canada of empty rhetoric of the kind, if I may say so with all due respect to him, too often characteristic of the mover of today's motion.

It is ironic that the Member for Davenport accuses me of returning from Washington with a second-rate plan mended together for public relation purposes. I will set aside for the moment the question of how many arrangements, let alone first-class ones, he was able to make when he was Minister of the Environment for longer than I have been to date.

Mr. Caccia: We laid the groundwork for you to do this.

Mr. McMillan: If I was truly interested in playing to the grandstands, as the Hon. Member for Davenport has been saying, I would have chosen the route he frequently prefers: shrill rhetoric disguised as policy, inflexibility masquerading as philosophy, and rudeness defended as resolve. It is easy to cast oneself as a hero prepared to settle for nothing less than the perfect plan. According to that kind of environmental theology, it is preferable to let the rivers spoil with toxins until perfection can be achieved in some ideal world than to act now to deal with the problem in the real world. In my view, the goal of perfection is a prescription for procrastination. Some people would prefer a plan that will never be agreed upon by anyone but themselves to one that, whatever its imperfections, helps us get on with the job. That is not my approach, Sir.

In conclusion, while some people waste their time figuring out how many environmental angels can dance on the head of a pin, my Department and I are busy making the environment better, not for angels but for Canadians, their children, and generations of Canadians yet unborn. We recognize that the management plan is not the end of the road. In a sense it is, instead, the beginning of it, in that we have a long way to go before anyone will feel safe bathing in the Niagara River let alone drinking directly from it. Our goal is nothing less, as I believe, is the goal of the Opposition, than the restoration of what was once the mighty Niagara, a symbol of our shared continent and of a commitment to real work, real solutions, and real progress in the real world. I think that what happened in Washington this week was, by any standards, an important step along that road.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, why is the original plan which was produced in October of last year still unknown? The public and the Opposition could at least measure progress against that plan in order to know what the significant improvements are.

● (1440)

Secondly, why is the present plan that he and the EPA administrator discussed still unknown? Thirdly, why did he choose to make public his difference of opinion with his colleague in Ontario? I asked him this question in my speech and I think he owes an answer to this House and the Canadian

public. Given the statement he made at the beginning of this week before going to Washington, it seems to me he has to prove it was not irresponsible to break ranks on the Canadian side and give Washington an idea that Canada was receptive to two different levels of quality. That is why we are saying it is second-rate stuff.

If the Minister does not believe in basic thinking, in principles and guidelines in an approach to the environment, if he wants to play it by the seat of his pants, he did not mention once in his speech that there is an agreement between the two countries. Lee Thomas, with all the problems he may have, has an international obligation to us. The Minister seems to be totally unaware of that fact. He has not done his homework. He has not done the studies needed in order to put forward Canada's position. He persists in creating the impression that the EPA is doing us a favour by contemplating the problems along the Niagara River. It is not a favour. Lee Thomas has an obligation to Canada but that does not seem to get through the skull of the Minister.

I have asked him three questions, I hope he will answer them because they are important. Why the secrecy over the plan? Why did he go public on his differences on the Canadian side before going to Washington, and while in Washington?

Mr. McMillan: Mr. Speaker, it puzzles me that the Hon. Member for Davenport, as a former Minister of the Environment, would not understand the process. There was a Niagara River toxic chemicals committee report. It was a general study or analysis of the condition of the Niagara River. On the basis of that report, there were to be four action plans, each done by one of the participating jurisdictions: the Government of the United States, the Government of the State of New York, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada. Each was to have its own action plan in the context of the Niagara River toxic chemicals committee report, addressing the same problem from different perspectives and jurisdictions.

What we are talking about, as far as this plan is concerned, is the American response to the committee. It is their action plan, not mine. I was invited by Lee Thomas to participate in the improvement of an American action plan. We have a Canadian plan, an Ontario plan, a New York State plan, and, of course, the Americans have a national plan. It was not my plan. It was not mine to release. It was an internal American Government document designed to be made public by them on their own schedule. That is point number one.

His second question is why we do not release the new document. I have been working on that action plan hand-in-glove with the Americans almost every day since October 17, 1985. My officials have been directly involved, many of them have gone to Washington for this purpose. I also worked on it myself on a one-to-one basis with the head of the EPA. Even as I went to Washington this week, the plan was not completed. Had it been, I would not even have gone. My purpose in going was to see if we could give it one more shot. We did. In particular, we agreed on a statement that would