

The Address—Mr. Roberts

I believe there is a need for a clarifying and strengthening of the federal government's role in that area.

We are developing a new federal environmental protection policy which will require new federal legislation. That legislation will, among other things, protect us and our environment against the hazards of toxic chemicals. The policy and the legislation which I hope to introduce into the House within the next 18 months must recognize the environment as an entirety and not as a collection of disparate parts. It must increase the effectiveness of the environmental protection service which has the mandate to ensure that the federal responsibilities in environmental protection achieve national objectives. The capacities of all governments must be used to the fullest in addressing serious environmental concerns. The new policy and legislation will clarify relative federal and provincial responsibilities. Some tasks are clearly more efficiently led at the national level, and we believe that the management of toxic chemicals is one of these.

There are three immediate, urgent problems on which I should touch in this area of environmental protection. The first is that of toxic chemicals, which I have just referred to. At the meeting of the council of environment and resource ministers in Halifax at the end of last week, all provincial governments expressed their strong concern that we must do much more than we are doing now to control the transportation of hazardous waste. All governments at the federal and provincial level believe that what we need is a much more effective ticketing or manifest system to ensure that there is a knowledge from the cradle to the grave of the development and transportation of those wastes. We are intent upon moving in the direction, which the provinces wish us to follow, of establishing such a manifest system. It is my hope—and I am carrying on discussions to explore this possibility—that we may be able to reach those objectives by amendments to the present legislation on the transportation of hazardous goods, which is at committee stage in the House.

The second area which is of great importance is that of the testing and experimentation and knowledge of the implications of chemicals as they are developed. Hundreds of chemicals are developed each year within the world. Very little is now done to provide a standard testing and assurance of what the possible consequences of those chemicals may be. Canada, through my deputy minister who is chairman of a committee at OECD on this matter, is leading in the fight to establish an international system of testing and ticketing to provide a passport for new chemicals on a standard basis so that the implications of their use can be well understood.

● (1540)

The third matter of urgent and pressing concern is one which I have discussed in the House in the past, and that is the matter of acid rain. Members will remember, perhaps, that I have already told the House that we are pressing the United States as hard as we can to move as quickly as we can to establish an international accord to regulate the control of emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen composites which

now pose an extremely serious threat to both our countries, the United States and Canada. We in Canada cannot resolve this problem alone. We must do it co-operatively with our neighbours to the south. But they equally have an interest with us in responding to that problem.

Many times I have been asked what are the costs of so doing. The costs are enormous. The costs in terms of Canada will be an expenditure of something like \$400 million a year to the end of this century. The cost for the United States will be eight to ten times that figure. But the costs of not responding to the acid rain problem are even greater. It is difficult to earmark those costs, but we do know they are not hundreds and hundreds of millions, but are, indeed, into the billions of dollars each year. United States studies, for instance, have emphasized that the cost simply of the erosion and destruction of buildings in the United States attributable to acid rain problems is roughly \$4 billion a year.

In Canada we have special concerns for tourism, for the fishing industry, the health of our forests and the hazards to life which acid rain involves. This is an urgent and pressing necessity and we must press the United States not only for an agreement internationally; we must ask them to give the same concern that we now do to the use of present regulations which are in place to diminish to the highest degree possible the emission of these dangerous contaminants to the air.

I said earlier that our concerns were not simply with environmental protection—though, as I have just described, those are extremely important—but that what we are really concerned with in the Department of the Environment is helping to establish for this country an economic strategy which exploits properly, prudently and sagely over the long term our natural and renewable resources. Canada's economic strategy for the eighties must increasingly recognize that resources represent our economic advantage. We must preserve and develop this advantage through intelligent resource management; through farming or renewing, not simply exploiting and mining, our forests, through preserving the best of our agricultural and forest land; through the wise use of our waters and through careful regulation and protection of our migratory wildlife. This wide use of resources has long been called conservation, and that must be the cornerstone of our approach to these departmental responsibilities.

The most important example of the use of that approach is the forestry sector, an extraordinarily important sector to this country. I recently announced the continuation and extension of the forestry policy which my two immediate predecessors had charted. We believe that the yield from our forests can be doubled by the end of this century if we do follow prudent practices of conservation, and it is our intention to push to ensure that, in co-operation with the provinces, we establish a situation in which reforestation and the renewal of our forest resources is placed on a much more satisfactory, long-term footing than is now the case.

All of these policies which I have described are policies which are designed to build the economy, but they will not be of much use if the building of our country, instead of continu-