

Adjournment Debate

tions by strangers constitute a very small but extremely important number of cases.

As we are beginning to understand more about this problem we are becoming better equipped to deal with it. It is a sincere initiative by this government to address a very real problem. The hon. member does us all a service by keeping this issue in the forefront of our concerns here, but I do not accept the criticisms that she has made of the government's initiatives in this area. They are initiatives of which all members of this House, in a non-partisan fashion, ought to be very proud.

ACID RAIN

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, in June of last year President Bush announced his intention to transmit a bill to Congress which would, among other things, reduce emissions causing acid rain. Specifically, the bill would amend the Clean Air Act by inserting a number of sections that call for nitrogen oxides to be reduced by 2 million tons and sulphur oxides by 10 million tons relative to their 1980 emission levels by the year 2000.

It was clear that President Bush recognized acid rain as a serious environmental problem and one that demanded immediate action. The time had finally come for concrete action rather than more study.

At least 50 per cent of Canada's acid rain, and as much as 70 per cent in some areas, has its origins in emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide from heavily industrialized regions of the United States. Canada's contribution to American acid rain, in retrospect and in comparison, amounts to 10 or 15 per cent of their total.

My purpose in quoting these figures is not because I want to point fingers but to illustrate that while there is a movement of airborne pollution across the international boundary in both directions, there is an obvious imbalance in terms of contributions to the problem. This imbalance accounts for Canada's determination to work with the United States to deal with our common problem.

As a member of both the subcommittee on acid rain and the special committee on acid rain, I can report that we recognized that the only way we could convince the American government that it should take steps to reduce that problem was by taking the necessary steps to reduce acid rain in our own country. We could hardly go to the

United States and demand that costly pollution controls be implemented if our own domestic controls were lacking.

Significant steps have indeed been taken in Canada which demonstrate our resolve. For example, agreements to fight acid rain have been reached between the federal government and the seven easternmost provinces. Some \$150 million dollars has been provided to help companies lower sulphur dioxide emissions by 50 per cent 1994. This will significantly reduce the amount of acid rain that we export to the United States. The maritime provinces are currently participating in three pilot projects worth \$50 million to develop cleaner, more efficient methods of using coal.

Stricter standards have been in effect since September 1987 to reduce motor vehicle emissions by 45 per cent. In March 1986, the government established a new program to eliminate the hazards posed by the presence of lead in gasoline. As a result, leaded gasoline emissions will be virtually eliminated in this country by 1990. Clearly there is a lot more that we can do, but I think that at the very least we have demonstrated a willingness to do our part.

That is why it is particularly distressing to hear the American justice department's views on the issue of acid rain. In a written brief submitted to the U.S. Court of Appeals, the department states that a number of reports, both in Canada and the U.S., document the existence of acid rain as a problem, but argues that important scientific questions remain unresolved concerning acid rain deposition effects on forests, lakes, crops and building materials.

This sounds all too familiar. When I asked the parliamentary secretary on December 19 what steps the ministry of the environment was taking to impress upon the American government the seriousness of acid rain, he indicated that a January meeting was planned between Canadian and American officials to discuss a bilateral accord on acid rain.

I would like the parliamentary secretary responsible for reporting to the House this evening to comment on the results of that meeting.

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by paying tribute to the work of the hon. member for Fundy Royal. He has worked over the years on the important issue of acid rain and keeping this issue very much alive before the House.