

Car Emission Controls

Mr. Caccia: Those who want inaction, paid by the companies.

Mr. Forrestall: The Canadian Automobile Association urged the Department of the Environment to expand its work in monitoring air quality and its research into the effects of pollution. The Association also urged motor vehicle manufacturers to greater effort in the development of emission control systems.

Let me raise another point, Mr. Speaker. I would like to emphasize that this issue is not one for the federal Government to consider alone. The federal Government can control the performance of new motor vehicle designs as manufactured and imported, and we will. But those efforts must be supported by the provinces and indeed, all automobile owners, including ourselves, to ensure the proper operation of our cars. Each and every one of us must make sure that we maintain in good working order the built-in emission control systems.

Car owners have the responsibility to ensure the safe and effective operation of their vehicles. All provincial Governments have to ensure that mechanical staff in automobile service centres look after the proper replacement and maintenance of defective automobile and light truck emission controls. I concur with the Minister of Transport in his view that a decision on the need for more stringent emission standards needs careful study and evaluation of the costs and benefits.

Mr. Caccia: Shame. That would not be supported by the Hon. Member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling).

Mr. Forrestall: The Ministries of Transport, Environment, Energy, Regional Industrial Expansion, and Health and Welfare are all dealing with this most crucial issue. I am confident they will be announcing an appropriate decision and one which the Hon. Member for Davenport, whose Bill is in front of us, will warmly accept. Thank you for allowing me to participate in your debate.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that I support the proposal contained in the Private Member's Bill we are debating. I hope that very soon we will see an announcement by the Government in this area. However, I must say that some of the optimism I allowed myself in the last few weeks about an announcement by the Government concerning adopting auto emission standards at least equivalent to what pertains in the United States has seeped away, shall we say, as I listened to the kind of arguments put forward by the Hon. Member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall).

A week or so ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said that if we wanted to bargain with the United States with respect to acid rain, we ought to have clean hands when we go to the bargaining table. That was a sentiment I had expressed in the House just about a week before the Prime Minister said that. I got up and encouraged the Government to proceed with an announcement on auto emission standards, among other things, so that when President Reagan met with the Prime Minister on March 17 and talked about acid rain, he would

have something concrete to point to. The President of the United States would not be in a position to say that with respect to nitrous oxide emissions we have not even caught up with the United States. I still hope that we will have that kind of announcement from the Government before March 17, in spite of the tone of some of the arguments which were being advanced by the Hon. Member on the government side. It is important to show that we are willing to clean up our own back yard. That was a good sentiment expressed by the Prime Minister. I hope that in the near future he will show that he really means that by making an announcement on auto emission standards and by providing concrete funds with respect to the arrangement on acid rain made between the federal Government and the provinces. If the Prime Minister does that, we will know that this is not simply another public relations exercise on the eve of a presidential visit or just an attempt to placate the environmental concerns of Canadians.

● (1740)

I would like to comment on the statement made by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) that pollution is not partisan. Any truly important issue is not partisan to the extent that everyone must transcend his or her own particular self-interest and attempt to see the larger context. However, issues are partisan in the true sense of the word in that there are a number of different ways in which to solve any given problem. To the extent that we argue with one another here about the best approach to the solution, we are going to disagree with each other. I feel that it is needlessly pious to say that this is a non-partisan matter. There are some very serious economic, ideological and political questions involved in the issue of acid rain. To pretend that there are not is in fact political stance which is an attempt to avoid the difficult political questions which attend this issue as well as others.

The political stance of the Liberal Party is to avoid the difficult ideological and philosophical questions which attend the environmental issue in the same way as they successfully encourage Canadians to see the questions of security and disarmament in the same non-ideological and non-partisan way. Canadians want to believe that is the case. I understand that. However, I suggest to all Members that we do a disservice to the need for a good debate on these difficult topics when we fall for the illusion that there are not difficult political and ideological questions that must be faced in these issues.

Although it may seem strange, in a way I may actually prefer a Minister of the Environment who makes no pretence about being concerned about the environment. Every time she rises in her place to speak about the environment, she talks about the deficit and the economic strategies of the Government. She sees her role of Minister of the Environment as being instrumental to the Government's over-all economic strategy. She is very honest and upfront about that. I do not think Hon. Members should be upset about that, particularly the Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour), who has made a point of criticizing decisions made by the