

Further inaction
disastrous

It will be obvious in this that we are dealing with a phenomenon that will not evaporate or otherwise disappear. The realities of energy supply and demand make it inevitable that even at present emission levels the situation will deteriorate even further than it has. With the growth in both our countries of coal-burning, energy generation, further inaction will prove to be disastrous. Yet even the fact that we possess the technology which can permit us to live with a higher level of coal consumption at much lower emission levels will not save us unless we are convinced of the need to apply the rule of law in order to eliminate the problem arising from the inequity in the present distribution of the costs of acid rain, as well as to combat the damage acid rain inflicts on both our countries.

It can be argued, of course, that legislators will respond only to the expressed concerns of their constituents, and that, while there is a very high level of concern and sensitivity in Canada about acid rain, there is a relatively low level of concern in the United States. But this point of view overlooks some present-day realities and ignores the nature of our historical relationship.

For one thing, media reports and conferences such as this clearly demonstrate accelerating interest in the United States. I understand this reflects a growing awareness of the potential for extensive environmental damage in such areas of the United States as New England, the North Central region, parts of the Rocky Mountain region and the Appalachian area. And so, while the acid rain phenomenon has not yet had as profound a recognition generally in the United States as it has had in Canada, alert and far-sighted Americans appear to be heeding the warning signs.

I believe, also, that legislators in the United States are unlikely to fly in the face of our historical methods of resolving problems common to our two countries. Canada and the United States have developed a long tradition over the years of solving their environmental problems effectively, fairly and with careful attention to international law and responsibility. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is a particularly fine example of how our countries have co-operated to deal effectively with a large-scale pollution problem.

Legislative
action

But acid rain is a serious bilateral issue because Canadians perceive that further delay in tackling the burgeoning threat of acid rain can result in further incalculable damage. Such delays would be particularly repugnant to Canadians if they were the result solely of narrow vested interests. But it is clear that legislative action is now vital if further damage is to be averted. It was in recognition of this that the Canadian House of Commons and the Senate recently voted unanimously to provide the authority — through amendments to the Clean Air Act — to meet our obligations towards the United States *vis-à-vis* transboundary air pollution.

In light of this legislative action, and the actions taken to begin controlling Canadian pollutant sources, Canadians now expect the United States to demonstrate the same degree of concern to address the problem. In short, we in Canada are convinced that we cannot resolve acid rain ourselves. We urgently need the co-operation of the United States.
