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the short run, and which would even reduce emissions in the long run.

In reading over the memorandum of intent of 1980, I thought that was the first step toward the recognition of what was becoming a very serious problem. I thought that, although there was no clear solution put forward, the memorandum set out the process which was to be followed. In fact, that process was followed with the general support of a great number of people from all political persuasions in every part of Canada. In fact, it was even followed by similar like-minded individuals in the United States.

● (1200)

As a result of that Memorandum of Intent, they set up the working groups that did the necessary research, that sought out solutions and that quantified and qualified the acid rain components and made recommendations. The Minister knows what the recommendations were so let me read them to Hon. Members of the House. When the final reports were put in on the Canada-U.S. working groups in February 1983, they concluded on the following six matters:

—acid rain occurs in eastern North America within, and downwind from, major industrial regions

That allows us to isolate to some extent the source of the problem. They went on to say:

—damage in both the short and long term is occurring in areas vulnerable to acid rain as a result of sulphur deposition

—wet sulphate deposits greater than . . . (18 pounds per acre per year), in moderately sensitive areas, cause damage in lakes and rivers; in areas with deposits of below 20 kg/ha/yr no damage has been recorded

That gave us a sense of the important areas that were being affected. It gave us a sense of where we were to put our emphasis and where we could treat the problem with long-term but less immediate actions. They went on:

—the damage is primarily caused by sulphur deposits and the solution is to reduce them

—technology does exist to reduce emissions substantially

—if there are no changes in abatement programs it is forecast that emissions will increase through the remainder of this century.

We in Canada took that seriously. I say to the Liberal critic, the former Minister of the Environment, that while I am not entirely happy with everything he ever did, he at least did take the problem seriously.

Together with the jurisdictions most affected provincially, the Government did in fact move to try to put in place in Canada an adequate or at least an interim response to the problem. However, the problem continued because our friends in the United States refused to accept the findings. The administration of the United States, though it paid lip-service to it at the time, refused to accept that strict measures consistent with what were then being put in place in Canada should also be put in place in those areas of the U.S. that created the acid rain problem.

Since that time, though Canada has tried, I can say truthfully that our friends in the United States administration have done virtually nothing. Notwithstanding substantial expenditures, we continue to suffer. When we put acid rain on the

agenda for yet another summit meeting I anticipated not a further statement of concern, because we received a Statement of Concern and a Memorandum of Intent in 1980 and we received a Statement of Concern in 1981 when the President of the United States visited Canada and stood here in the House of Commons to address the House. He himself said at that time, if not in these words, certainly in words very similar to these, that he recognized the serious transboundary environmental problem that exists as a result of acid rain. I admit that those were not his exact words but that was his intent as I understood it at the time, and I still feel that that was his intent in rereading it.

The President of the United States, rather than continue with his somewhat farcical view that somehow acid rain was the result of bird droppings, did acknowledge that there was a serious problem. One might have expected that as a result of that acknowledgement, he would bring forward substantive programs designed to help ease the problem, but no, no such programs came forward.

We then advanced ourselves through to the Drew Lewis-Bill Davis era. I was willing to accept that the appointment of those two fine gentlemen was intended to achieve some solution to the impasse that existed between Canada and the U.S. administration on acid rain. I do not doubt for a moment that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), in appointing Mr. Davis, whom I have known for years, and Mr. Lewis, whom I did not know but have come to understand was concerned, intended not simply to have them restate the obvious but rather to advance the cause beyond the stage of rhetoric. Unfortunately, that simply does not seem to have happened. The report that was tabled by Messrs. Davis and Lewis in essence reidentified the problem but it did not, as the Minister himself alluded to some time ago, set out how the problem ought to be dealt with. Neither did it demand from the participants that there should be some clear and easily defined course of action followed.

In order to have this understood by those who might be watching, I should quickly point out what acid rain is. It is not something for which one purchases an umbrella, although an umbrella may keep acid rain off one's head. Maybe your hair will not turn the colour of mine if you have an umbrella to keep acid rain away from it, Mr. Speaker. I do not know.

Mr. McMillan: It's too late.

Mr. Deans: It is too late for the Minister and I, but not for everyone else.

What is acid rain? Environment Canada put out an excellent document which sets out in pretty clear and unequivocal terms what acid rain really is. I read from that document as follows:

Acid rain has been called the greatest environmental threat that Canada has ever faced. The rains and snows that were once cleansing and pristine have now become, as a result of human activity, dangerously acid and destructive.

Two common by-products of our modern industrial lifestyle—sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides—cause acid precipitation. When these pollutants are discharged into the atmosphere, they can be transformed into sulphuric acid and nitric acid respectively.