

Supply

Mr. Wappel: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to the Hon. Minister's comments and I would like to begin my short comments by saying that it is obvious that all of us breathe the same air, we live in the same country and we use the same lakes. We all have concerns about the environment. It is a little depressing to constantly hear the Hon. Minister tell us what previous Governments did not do. We are interested in the environment of the future. We are interested in having our children able to breathe clean air. We do not need a history lesson.

The Hon. Minister asked why Members of the Opposition do not understand what the Government is doing to protect the environment and then he proceeded to give us a number of examples of what the Government was doing. I found it interesting to note that the first thing he cited as an example of what the Government has been doing for the environment was that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) received an award. An award does not do anything for the environment. I do not quite follow the logic of how the Prime Minister happening to get an award for whatever reason, political or otherwise, is an example of good environmental policy.

The Minister did set out a number of specifics which were of some interest. However, the Government has been around for five years and these things are only coming now. The Minister mentioned environmentally sustainable development and what I will call a "super ministry". I remind him that the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) has been calling for a super ministry, for sustainable development and for a Minister who has over-all power over the environment for many years. The Minister should not pretend that this is a sudden Conservative brainstorm from the Cabinet.

My question to the Minister is very specific. He said that he had agreements with seven provinces. Does he have any agreements on acid rain with any states or with the U.S. Government? If he does, what are they? If he does not, what is going on with respect to negotiations with the United States on acid rain?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Member for asking a precise question on the acid rain phenomenon which represents a national disaster for Canada. This acid rain phenomenon was identified a great many years ago. As Canadians, we never paid much attention to it, but we have come to realize over the past few years that it is indeed quite dramatic.

I should like to remind the House that this Government was the first to raise this issue with the Americans and to open negotiations with them and to demonstrate to them that we were determined to put an end to this situation. We have gone half way. I mentioned that before. The Hon. Member has been kind and honest enough to recognize that we have signed agreements with seven Provincial Governments.

As far as the United States are concerned, however, let us not kid ourselves. Let us not count our chickens before they are hatched. Yet, the circumstances are such now that we may entertain a legitimate hope. The new Administration in that country has appointed people who have the trust and credibility of environmental organizations. The President of the United States has made very clear commitments. There is already a Bill before the American Congress. The Administration is supposed to introduce another one before the end of this month; after that, we will be able to open with them negotiations which, I hope in the interest of Canada as a whole, will help solve part of the acid rain problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time allocated for questions and comments has ended. Debate. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Mrs. Copps) has the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that I will have a chance to raise a few points before the Minister leaves. I understand that he has to rush off to Washington, presumably to be a part of the ceremony that will be held for the award that is to be received by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) tonight. I would like to launch a challenge. I think the Minister would do far more for his credibility as a Minister if he encouraged the Prime Minister to refuse the award, an award given by a group that has an international record of ignoring the problems of acid rain.