

## Some Progress Abroad

In November 1979, thirty-four member countries of the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe signed a broad agreement entitled, "The Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution."

The Convention provides for the monitoring of pollutants and of rainfall, the sharing of information and cooperative research programs. It sets no specific goals and provides no enforcement machinery.

Armin Rosencranz of the Environmental Law Institute commented a year after the signing of the agreement on its results.

"In Geneva, the United States praised Scandinavian endeavors to focus attention on the acid rain predicament while resisting Scandinavia's efforts to impose specific standstill or abatement goals in the treaty . . . .

"Any such provision could require

strengthening America's clean air regulations, already under pressure because of the shift to coal burning. West Germany has steadily resisted any proposals that would require adjustments in its domestic air pollution control policies, energy options or even measurement methods. The British are publicly skeptical about the urgency and the supposed irreversibility of the acid rain problem, even in the face of evidence showing that Britain may be contributing as much as sixty per cent of the sulphur compounds that Norway receives.

"Bilateral arrangements do not fare much better. Canadian-U.S. negotiators are far from a formal agreement after eighteen months of talks. Meanwhile the United States continues to send four times as much sulphur pollution to Canada as it receives from that country . . . . The prospects for the future look bleak."

## "How Many More Lakes Have to Die. . .?"

(Roger Simmons, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, addressed a seminar on Acid Rain and Salmon in Portland, Maine, last November. Below are some excerpts from his speech.)

"We know the class and regional source areas of emissions in a general sense. We know where the sensitive areas are in both countries. And we have a reasonable appreciation of damaging effects on those areas. But we cannot now, and the scientists tell me that we will probably never be able to say that the emissions from this particular plant are killing the fish in this particular lake. Because we do not have this kind of information, the governments of both countries are open to

criticism from certain interests that we are imposing a hardship on some sectors of the economy without knowing if it is necessary. My answer, and this is the official position of the Government of Canada, is that we cannot wait for a perfect understanding of the acid rain phenomenon before moving to control it. If we had waited back in 1972 for a complete understanding of the effects of phosphorus on the Great Lakes before starting our joint clean-up program, we would still be waiting and Lake Erie would be irreversibly dead. We know that we have been badly abusing some of our most precious natural resources and that abuse must be stopped. How many more lakes have to die before we get the message?"



*The source of the Hudson River, Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondacks, is acidified.*