

When I say that acid rain has been in the news a lot lately, I also mean that there have been articles that dismiss the threat. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* argued that the acid rain question has been grossly exaggerated, that unproven variables enter the equation, that the matter needs more research, and that controls might prove to be ineffective. The report's author, by the way, was the president of the National Coal Association.

I am convinced that we already know as much as we need to know to begin to take action against acid rain. Over 3 000 scientific studies have already been done. In Canada, we know that 48 per cent of the 2 000 lakes surveyed to date in Ontario are very sensitive to acid rain. We know that, in Sweden and Norway, fish life has already been destroyed in over 6 500 lakes.

A tremendous amount of research has already been done. The Norwegian SNSF Project [State Research for Natural Sciences] alone is a collection of over 100 papers describing the effects of environmental impacts of acid precipitation on Scandinavia over an eight-year period.

**Emission
controls
necessary**

Perhaps one might argue that overview studies, or studies relevant to the American or Canadian experience, are lacking. Not so. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the U.S.-Canada Research Consultation Group, the National Research Council of Canada – all argue that acid rain is a genuine threat; that it is caused by the long range transport of SO₂ and NO_x; and that emission controls are the best way of dealing with the problem.

Evidence also indicates that the United States, as well as Canada, is in serious jeopardy. A study, prepared for U.S. Senators Stafford and Mitchell by the Office of Technology Assessment, found that one out of every four streams in the northeastern United States has already been damaged by acid rain. In the larger 27-state region covered by the study, one out of six lakes, and one out of five streams, have been harmed by acid rain.

The report indicated that in the northeast and upper midwest, up to 80 per cent of the lakes and streams are at risk. It held that there would be no hope for reversing the damage to those lakes and streams unless steps are taken to reduce the air pollution that causes acid rain.

Some people who downplay the threat argue that it is more due to local pollution sources than to far distant ones. Let me cite the recent Jason Report, prepared under the auspices of the Stanford Research Institute for the U.S. Department of Energy. The Jason Report found that, while the amount of local NO_x and SO₂ emissions has actually decreased in New York and New England over the last ten years, the acidity of precipitation in those states has increased, strongly suggesting the long range transport of pollutants.
