

Supply

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the Minister would want to hear the comments of both opposition Parties before he responded. If the Minister tells me that he wants to speak now and not pay any attention to what we have to say, then I suppose I would be willing to yield the floor to him on that basis. However, if the Minister cares about what both opposition Parties have to say with respect to the matter, then perhaps he would like to listen and then respond to both at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Debate.

Mr. McMillan: Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deans: You don't want to hear what we have to say?

Mr. McMillan: I will listen.

Mr. Deans: Why don't you respond to both at once?

Mr. McMillan: Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of whether or not I wish to listen to the Hon. Member or his Party. I am entirely in the Chair's hands with respect to who has the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Mr. Deans has the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I would like to think that we are going to deal with this matter in as non-partisan a way as we possibly can. I wish to say to the Minister that I appreciate him giving us the opportunity to put our views on the record in order that he might respond to both the motion put forward by the Official Opposition and our position in this regard.

At the outset I want to say that I note with interest that the motion is written in such a way as to be non-inflammatory, as best as one can be in situations such as this. I think the motion is put forward with the best of intentions in an effort to try to advance the cause of the battle against acid rain, as opposed to taking on some direct and narrow political interest.

In saying that I wish to make it clear that, frankly, we do not care to listen to the ongoing battle of whether the Conservatives or the Liberals have done more or less. That does not seem relevant at this point in time. It makes very little sense to point a finger across the floor at the previous administration and claim that somehow or other the problem was created by it. In essence, the problem is everyone's. It is the problem of every Member of Parliament. Whether the Liberals, the Conservatives or, for that matter, the NDP were in Government, I suggest the same course of action should be followed in trying to come to the satisfactory conclusions which must be reached.

In looking back over the recent history of the whole question of acid rain it brought to mind arguments that we have had going back 20 years about various different kinds of pollution. I was reminded of the problems that confronted Governments at every level in trying to introduce legislation which would adequately deal with the devastation that results from the

disposal of noxious, or even obnoxious, wastes. I remember spending a great deal of time on the question of the disposal of liquid industrial waste. I remember arguments taking place over many years with respect to the deep well process which was being advanced and which carried with it significant problems. There were the risks to the water-tables to be considered, particularly in areas surrounding major municipalities. The problems were serious enough to justify not pursuing that particular course of action. It was felt that the highly pressurized deep well operations being recommended were not suitable in many areas, if they were suitable anywhere, because of the faults in the rock structure which allowed the pressure to drive the poisonous liquids into the water supplies of municipalities. While that could not occur overnight it would inevitably happen over time. Therefore, it was felt that that type of solution was not adequate. It was a solution that was embraced to a large extent by industry because it was a simple and cheap solution. It offered a short-term way of dealing with the problem. I said then, and I say now, that it will prove to be disastrous in some areas in the not-too-distant future. The metropolitan Toronto area is one of these areas. The water-table there is somewhat north of metropolitan Toronto and it feeds much of the area, as well as feeding the northern, western and eastern outskirts of the city. The water-table is detrimentally affected by the allowing of liquid industrial waste to saturate the earth in areas north and northeast of Toronto. Having said that, I recall people telling me not to worry about it because the problem would be resolved in time. I was told that a solution was being worked on, and I waited.

There is also the question of nuclear waste, the disposal of it and the inappropriate ongoing manufacture of it in areas where there is no necessity for that to occur. I consider that there are many long-term problems associated with it which will affect not only Canada's disposal of it but which will affect Canada in the way the U.S. determines how it will dispose of its nuclear waste. We are now faced with serious questions on the borders of a number of our provinces, Manitoba being one which comes quickly to mind, where the U.S. administration is looking at disposal of nuclear waste in areas immediately adjacent to, if not right within, certain Canadian jurisdictions.

I say to the Government that that adds up to another serious problem which we have to confront. It is a problem which we have not yet been able to confront because technology is not now available to deal satisfactorily with this particular question. Yet we continue to develop more and more of the waste product while waiting and hoping that someday the technology will be in place to deal with it. There is no evidence to show that will be the case.

With respect to the question of acid rain, it is quite different. To a large extent the technology to deal with it is in place. There are methods available to deal with the spill of acid rain over the environment. There are ways available to cut back on emissions. There are ways to clean up those emissions. In fact, there are ways to bring the matter into conformity with what most of us would agree are limits which could be lived with in