

want to return to the analogy of the dance floor and the dance hall because the Leader of the Government now has said that he thinks that he has succeeded in getting the President into the dance hall. I thought at one time that I, too, had managed to get the American administration into the dance hall but the Government of the United States asserted very strongly that there was no link between environmental degradation and sulphur dioxide emissions; that the scientific evidence was lacking, and therefore it would be quite wrong to launch into an action program without the necessary research. Of course, Canadian scientists were absolutely aghast at this contention by the United States.

● (1440)

Finally, Mr. Shultz, in an effort to advance the cause, with good faith, I think, agreed that both Canada and the United States would appoint scientists from each country to look at the matter and to see whether they could reconcile their differences—and they did reconcile their differences. At least that problem was taken off the table, but we did not get to dance because the President himself refused to sanction any program of acid reduction.

Therefore I am asking now: Is it possible that Mr. Davis and Mr. Lewis must now go back to that scientific question? Will that be part of the mandate?

I go on to a second illustration that is quite important, in my opinion. Honourable senators may remember when Mr. Ruckelshaus was appointed the Environmental Secretary of the United States, and the assurance given at that time was that if anybody could do this job, it was Bill Ruckelshaus. I agree with that assessment; he was really quite a tremendous man and he did his damnedest. He even came to Halifax when Mr. Shultz was there and met with the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Caccia, on the question of acid rain, and nothing happened. We came away empty-handed because they were preparing for an election in the United States.

I must say, without contesting the good faith of the President of the United States, that I am really asking the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether he believes that this is just another evasive action to put off a decision. We do not need further studies; we want action, and I must say I am disappointed at this stage with this failure to get the President on the dance floor, even though the leader thinks he got him into the dance hall. Perhaps I will withhold my final judgment until I see the terms of reference. However, can the Leader of the Government in the Senate give me some assurance that there is something solid behind this effort?

Senator Roblin: I must agree with my honourable friend's description of the difficulties of the problem. I also agree with him that he and his colleagues were unable to do much about it. That is a fact; we know that. The problem is very difficult. However, we have now, for the first time, got the undertaking of the current President of the United States that he is willing to move a step further in this matter in the way that has been described.

[Senator MacEachen.]

I offer no guarantees whatsoever to this house as to what will happen, because I cannot foretell the future. However, I can say that this is an opening, an initiative which I welcome, and I think that with good faith something can be done. We can see, for example, how we can use the laws that are now in place in both countries—and there are some laws in place in both countries—to deal with this question. For example, we can see how to deal in the United States with the lobbies that are at work in the whole of this matter. In the United States, it is not a unitary government, as is the government in Canada, where the executive can make a finding and have things proceed on the basis of automatic parliamentary approval, one might say. It is quite different. The lobbies in the United States are very strong and very powerful, and undoubtedly they have had an influence that far exceeds that of any lobbies of the metal industry in this country in trying to influence our policy. There are real problems; I minimize them not at all. I think the honourable gentleman has been accurate in his analysis of the question.

With respect to the issue before us, the question asked of me was: Do I really think that the parties engaged in this matter are undertaking this exercise in good faith? And the answer is yes.

CROWN CORPORATIONS

COMPOSITION OF BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Hon. Ian Sinclair: Honourable senators, my interest, as I am sure the honourable members of this chamber are aware, is as always directed to crown corporations. Last Saturday, the Minister of Transport said that he held all of the shares of CNR. In view of the fact that the shareholders elect the board, can we expect that the Minister of Transport would exercise that right in regard to all of the directors of the Canadian National Railways?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): The other day, I sent my honourable friend a complete statement of the rules that govern Question Period in chambers of this sort. Having read those over, I am sure he will recall that he need not expect that I have any obligation to answer hypothetical questions of the sort that he has just posed.

Senator Sinclair: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government in the Senate said yesterday that it was not surprising that there would be Tories on the Board of Directors of Air Canada, in view of the fact that 50 per cent of Canadians were of Tory persuasion. I would like to ask the Leader of the Government if that is a statement of government policy—that the percentage of Tories is to be reflected on the boards of directors of crown corporations?

Senator Roblin: I merely stated the obvious fact that most Canadians support the Progressive Conservative Party.

Senator Sinclair: I have a supplementary, honourable senators. I have never heard even the Prime Minister claim that the Progressive Conservatives had 100 per cent support.