

On the whole, our bilateral environmental record has been impressive -- from the truly visionary Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to the renewal of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Niagara River Toxics Management Plan, the Porcupine Caribou Herd Agreement and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan of the past couple of years. There remains one anomaly in this otherwise solid record of joint environmental stewardship.

I am referring, of course, to acid rain. Acid rain falls, corrosively and without respect to the values they represent, on the Washington Monument, the White House, the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial. In Canada, our Parliament buildings are being similarly damaged. These facts symbolize the enormity of the damage our nations have been inflicting on our common heritage.

In Eastern Canada, at least 14,000 lakes are now acid dead. Another 300,000 are damaged or vulnerable. In Nova Scotia, many streams no longer support the salmon for which they were once famous and in Eastern Canada our magnificent forests are being seriously affected, including, tragically, maple forests.

The one thing acid rain does not do is discriminate. It is despoiling your environment as inexorably as it is ours. Your environment from Minnesota to Maine is being damaged. Marine life on the eastern seaboard is threatened.

Acid rain offers a tough lesson in interdependence. Half of the acid rain that falls in Canada -- and in some areas much more than half -- originates in the United States. And up to a quarter of the acid rain that falls in the U.S. northeast originates in Canada.

Nor, I should add parenthetically, is acid rain a stranger in Europe. Eerily faceless statues of the Virgin Mary in Poland, corroding columns of the Parthenon in Greece and the damage to the aquatic systems in Norway -- where the alarm bells went off first -- are evidence of the phenomenon's destructive international credentials.

International environmental problems yield only to international environmental solutions. But environmental responsibility, like charity begins at home.

When we came to power in 1984, we were acutely conscious -- and embarrassed -- that Canada was asking the United States for action on acid rain but that Canadian performance was equally lacking. We set out to clean up our own act. We reached