

Supply

the Minister like to confirm whether it is incorrect to say that the process of consultation with industry on car emissions was launched in the spring of 1984.

Finally on the question of summits, there is terminology that is causing some confusion. Regarding the question briefly touched upon earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary on the summit, I realize now that he was referring to a bilateral summit. To correct the record, I have to inform you that my reply to him dealt with the seven industrial nations summit of 1984. I realize now from the speech of the Minister that he was in his question referring to a summit in 1984 between Canada and the U.S. That was not the subject of my reply. In my reply I was referring to what was in 1984 I believe the Bonn summit between the seven industrial nations where acid rain was, and quite properly so, on the agenda, because these are the major industrial polluters in the world.

Mr. McMillan: I certainly did not wish to imply, nor did I, I think, that no planning has preceded the decision by the Government of which I am a part to make much more stringent the allowable emission levels for light duty motor vehicles. Clearly a lot of scientific work and some considerable thought by Government, including previous Governments, had been devoted to the issue, but no progress had been made beyond the actual preliminary work. It took this Government to bring that preparatory work together and give effect to the controls to which I addressed myself in my speech.

The emission controls on light duty vehicles take effect in September of 1984 for the 1988 motor vehicle year. They will be 45 per cent more stringent than those that prevailed before, bringing out standards to the level of the Americans, which until now have been three times more stringent than ours.

On the second question, I think it is significant that—I don't mean to be partisan here—the Official Opposition comes into this House and brings with it a laudable motion. But implicit in the motion is a criticism of the Government of Canada for the way in which it handled the acid rain question in Washington through the bilateral summit between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States. When that Party was in office it absolutely refused to put the issue on the agenda, much less deal with it effectively once it was on the agenda.

● (1250)

When my Party was in opposition we asked repeated questions in the House during Question Period, following a meeting between the then Prime Minister and the President. The Hon. Member for Vancouver South, the Hon. Member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, the Hon. Member for Bruce-Grey (Mr. Gurbin), myself and others would ask the Prime Minister and other Ministers if they had raised the acid rain issue and if so, what agreement was reached. We asked if an understanding had been reached, and every time, without exception, we were told, to our shock and disappointment, and that of the Canadian people, that the issue had not even been raised. Not only had it not been put on the agenda, it had not been discussed even informally. We would say: "Surely you took the occasion of meeting with the President of the United States in Wil-

liamsburg to express the concern Canadians have about the effects of acid rain on our environment and on the environment of the United States?" If this issue was not on the agenda formally, we thought that the then Prime Minister would at least have put it on a hidden agenda, raise it at a cocktail party or while walking the President to his car. The only response was that it had not been deemed appropriate.

No one occasion I was attacked by the then Prime Minister for even suggesting that it would have been appropriate for him to raise the acid rain question when meeting with the President of the United States in Europe for multilateral discussions. The Prime Minister said: "We cannot raise everything. When I see the President of the United States at a summit meeting of different countries, I cannot raise everything".

Acid rain is more than just another issue. It is the most important environmental issue ever faced by the United States or Canada. It is not just another bilateral issue, much less just another environmental issue. Acid rain is destroying our lakes, our streams and rivers. It is killing our fish and undermining our agriculture. It is devastating our forests and has even been demonstrated by science to have an effect on human health.

Members of the Liberal Party did not think it was important enough to raise the issue with the President of the United States even informally, much less formally. Now that Party has the gall and unmitigated temerity to come to the House and attack the present Prime Minister for the way he raised it in Washington. I do not know what you call it in your riding, Mr. Speaker, but in my riding and, I suspect, in Davenport, the attitude is called hypocrisy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Resuming debate.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by commending the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) for giving the House and all Members of Parliament the opportunity to direct our thoughts toward this urgent issue. I am sure every Member of Parliament recognizes that there is an urgent need for joint U.S.-Canadian action on the problem of acid rain.

I do not see any reason why the motion being debated today cannot be accepted by all Hon. Members in the House, particularly under the new rules by which the House now operates. There is no condemnation or question of confidence expressed in this motion. It is an outstanding way for the House to send a strong message to our counterparts in the United States Congress and the United States administration that while we have begun serious and concerted action in our country we know that the problem of acid rain will not be solved until they take some action themselves.

Canadians have known for a very long time that the acid rain problem is serious and is getting worse. As far back as 1981, our reputable, distinguished and accomplished National Research Council concluded in a very credible scientific report that acidic depositions, or acid rain, was a major environmental concern in many regions of North America and that it was a transboundary problem.