



# Statements and Speeches

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## ACID RAIN ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Conference on Acid Rain, State University of New York, Buffalo, New York, May 2, 1981

...I do not intend to review in detail today the issues surrounding the dangers and control of acid rain. These have been examined exhaustively and expertly by the many specialists who have preceded me here. Rather, as the minister responsible for Canada's foreign affairs, I want to examine the political components of this phenomenon — a phenomenon which for Canadians is a question demanding answers in the present, and for both our countries is an issue which goes to the heart of our relationship.

Most of you here today are familiar with the basic structure of Canada-U.S. relations. The relationship is one which spans much of our history and it has — for the most part — served us well. The unparalleled prosperity of both countries attests to that. And, despite our differences in population, and despite the different courses on which our national institutions have evolved, Canadians have learned to live alongside their neighbours in understanding and, frequently, with sympathy.

But beyond that, Canadians and Americans share a moral responsibility. Our prosperity and influence have not been solely the product of hard work or economic wisdom. From the very dawning of North American history, it was evident throughout the world that Canadians and Americans were the inheritors of one of the world's richest land masses. Over a span of more than 200 years the riches of America — as it was known in the old world — were little short of legendary. It was the promise of these resources that brought to this continent the millions of people who sought to fashion it into strong and influential economic and political entities.

How well our people have succeeded in achieving that is a matter of history. If our living standards over the years are a criterion, they have indeed succeeded in achieving their goals. But I want to suggest to you today that there is another dimension to that inheritance, namely our responsibility towards each other to ensure — through the rule of law — that what was given to us is not left ravaged and extinct because we lacked the foresight or the will to protect it for future generations of North Americans.

Your deliberations here over the past two days have focused on the need to prevent such a disaster. There are those, of course, who do not necessarily share our ominous view about the essentially tragic effects of unchecked acid rain. There are others who are pessimistic about the prospects for action to effectively control those emissions which have resulted in acid rain and the profound damage it is causing to much of our environment. There are others whose approach fails to take account of the true nature

Moral responsibility