

The federal Government bares its teeth without having the money to carry out its plans.

And after that first public relations exercise comes the second one in Quebec City, which saw the demise of all those beautiful government plans and the abdication before the American Government: "Yes, Mr. President, we are going to wait another year before making any move, before going further along the road to acid rain reduction. Yes, Mr. President, if it is your wish, instead of acting now and signing an agreement, we are going to appoint two representatives, two envoys who will spend a year thinking about the acid rain problem and who will then make a report." There is quite a gap between that second public relations exercise and the first one launched a month or a month and half earlier when we were told: "We are going to act now on acid rains. We are going to reduce emissions by 25 and 50 per cent in 1990 and 1994 respectively." As soon as Uncle Sam sets foot on Canadian Soil, out comes the jug of Irish Whiskey. And we hear: "Yes, Mr. President, we understand, we are willing to wait, we know that expenditures to reduce the huge quantity of acid rain blowing in from the United States are very heavy. We do understand. We will wait".

For sure this is not a courageous attitude. Looking at those facts, it is more readily realized that the motion put forward by my friend for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) may sound harsh. In fact, it is not harsh at all, it reflects the moral offence of someone who fought for years to protect the environment in Canada, who has been sent into in opposition by voters but who lost nothing of his aggressiveness and commitment to the Canadian environment. And I very well understand my colleague for not being satisfied with the treatment applied by this Government to our environment problems, and I understand very well that he would put such a motion forward.

Mr. Speaker, to this day, this Government has no reason to brag about its performance in the area of the environment. And since the Minister of Environment is now back in the House and is listening to some of our remarks, I only wish that over the coming months and for the time she will be holding that portfolio, she will deal more seriously with the problems facing her.

• (1700)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there any questions or comments? Since there are no questions or comments, we shall resume debate.

Mr. Gary Gurbin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have been here only for the last three speeches. I heard a little of the speech of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner), who is not here, unfortunately, to hear my reaction to some of his comments. I really think it would have been a lot more appropriate if this motion had been changed, in fact. I believe an appropriate

Supply

motion which could have been discussed intelligently by Hon. Members on all sides of the House, would probably read as follows:

After years of relative neglect, relatively unproductive efforts, inconsistent and often inadequate funding, the Government should be strongly encouraged to advance the protection of our environment with the principles that have already been established by the Progressive Conservative Government, and those are of rapid implementation of action plans; continued tangible financial commitments like the \$350 million that we have brought forward for the acid rain reduction program; continued and improved communication and co-operation such as with the Hare Commission, the MMT study group and others; and the continued co-operation and working with industry, provinces, the scientific and other interested parties, to help make the Canadian environment safe.

Further, that the Government should be encouraged to continue to demonstrate the important leadership that it has established through many government Departments, including the Prime Minister's Office, and to ensure that the next generations do not face the continued and unfortunate abuses that have been thus far threatening our environmental future.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the record over the last seven months, that would be a genuine, reasonable and honest type of motion which we could debate. I believe that this Government wants to be encouraged in the handling and management of the environment and important environmental issues which will continue to come before it.

Why are we dealing with the PCB problem, Mr. Speaker? Why are we dealing with acid rain? Why are we dealing with difficulties in transportation of any dangerous or hazardous products? What is the problem? How serious is the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) when he can bring forward a motion such as the one he has knowing that for the last number of years in a number of areas there has simply been an inadequacy in dealing with the important issues? There is example after example of the type of thing to which I am referring. Let us take acid rain, for example. Back in 1977, acid rain was identified by a Minister of the then Government as a ticking time bomb. Since that time how much reduction have we really accomplished? What do we have to show until the last six months in terms of an action plan which would bring about a satisfactory resolution? There have been goals. There have been some nice words and some great debate. But where was the solid plan? If there has been a piece of legislation brought forward or some kind of tangible, solid evidence that the Hon. Member for Davenport could point to, that would be all right, but there simply has not.

Another prominent area of debate has been the transportation of hazardous products. We as an opposition Party in 1980 very strongly supported changes to the Act or the introduction of an Act which would in fact control the transportation of goods like PCBs. But what has happened since 1980? Here we are in 1985, having to depend on the intelligence and the understanding of the now Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) in order actually to do something. Yet we still get the kind of—we would not want to think it was dishonest, but the political, if you like, harping from the Hon. Member for Davenport and other Hon. Members who have had their chance, and we still have the problem.

There are many other examples, Mr. Speaker, but one of the things I would like to focus on now is the question of relevance. Probably nowhere is it better able to be demonstrated than