

leadership of its President, was not prepared to recognize the problem. The issue of acid rain is rapidly coming to a head as the President of the United States remains among the very few to recognize the direct relationship between sulphur dioxide emissions and the destruction of our environment.

It saddens me as a Canadian, and particularly as a Liberal, to see the position taken by the Government, which is again another hands off position and a refusal to intervene in the issue of environment, which is the most critical area of Canadian quality of life. Not only has the Government taken a hands off approach to the whole acid rain question, we can see through the budget review process, the environmental statement and the actions of the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Blais-Grenier) that the Government has made a political decision to cut back on budgetary expenditures with respect to the environment across Canada.

In my own area there is the Canada Centre for Inland Waters with the herring-gull collection program. In fact, the Minister was forced to do a double flip on her position. However, notwithstanding her public relations promotion with respect to the reinstatement of that program, indeed it has not been fully reinstated. Groups across Canada that are concerned about the environment have been deeply disappointed by the position of the Government and of the Prime Minister.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) took the time to send a letter to the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain stating all of the wonderful things he would do the moment he was elected. We can see the results of that. They are pitiful.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the government generally and the Prime Minister in particular have made promises concerning the environment, and although I represent the most industrialized riding in Canada, I know the days are long gone when most people claimed that environment programs were impracticable because they were costly in jobs. We realize today that by protecting the environment, we are creating jobs for the future.

An Hon. Member: What have you done over the past 20 years?

Ms. Coppes: The Hon. Member would like to know what we have done over the past 20 years, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you what we have done. We have implemented the Clear Water Act and established a consensus within such committees as that chaired by Mr. Ron Irwin, made up of representatives of the three political parties, and which dealt with the acid rain issue.

Before the election, all Tory members agreed that Canada should carry out negotiations with the United States to reduce the level of toxic pollutants in Canada, especially sulfur dioxides. Yet, when they formed the new government, they forgot their promises altogether. Now, they refuse to act, unless they have the full support of the American president. There is something I should like to know, Mr. Speaker: As Canadian

Canada Safe Drinking Water Act

citizens living in Quebec, Ontario, or any of the other provinces, are we merely puppets of the United States? If not, I will ask you through bills such as this one which was introduced by the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) to increase the support which the Canadian people is giving to environmental issues.

[English]

In my riding, the Windermere Basin has been recognized as one of the three most polluted bodies of water in North America, as cited by the International Joint Commission. This is a result of the negligence of provincial Governments such as that of the Province of Ontario which has refused to recognize the serious nature of the pollution problem at places like Windermere Basin and the upper Ottawa street dump in my own community.

The provincial Government's refusal to upgrade sewer systems across the province has led us to a situation where the federal Government was forced last year to try to bail out the sewage systems in the Cities of St. Catharines, Sudbury and Toronto simply because the provincial Government was not prepared to make a firm commitment to clean water.

The record is clear. The Member for Beeches has already stated the situation as outlined by Pollution Probe in the City of Toronto with respect to the Great Lakes and particularly the people who drink the water in Lake Ontario. I not only drink the water of Lake Ontario, I swim in the water of Lake Ontario. I have very serious concerns about the degradation of the quality of water as I have seen it over the last few years.

The issue of the environment is one on which we can unite across Party lines. It is an issue that involves standing up to the American administration and saying that we will act on our own to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions if the American Government continues to resist all scientific evidence and international information and if the U.S. Government continues to insist that sulphur dioxide emissions are not the cause of acid rain across our nation. We are currently the recipients of a *laissez faire*—

[Translation]

—a policy of *laissez faire* on the part of our government, in spite of the letter which the Prime Minister wrote during the election campaign to Canadian coalitions against acid rains. He wrote: As soon as I am elected, I shall do my utmost to raise this issue within international circles. But we see what has happened. Ever since he has been elected, he has done everything the President of the United States wanted. He has done nothing to defend Canadian rights on the environment, to defend our rights to clear water to drink, to clean air to breathe and other vested interests like those of my constituents.

[English]

The people in my riding would like the Government to live up to the promises that it has made, particularly with respect to the environment.