

Adjournment Debate

of pollution and still does not see the responsibility of industry or of Government to push industry into cleaning up.

Why are we getting this response from the Americans? I suggest that it is in part because our own Government has sent a mixed message. It has told the Americans it will be friendly and will go along with whatever they say.

The joint report of the special envoys on acid rain by Drew Lewis of the United States and Bill Davis of Canada is an embarrassment and a scandal. It opts for more research, as if the problem was not already too well documented and as if we were not losing time in the battle against acid rain. It was a complacent report, agreed to by Canada's representative. We lost more time dealing with the report.

Why has this become another issue just recently? Just published has been a study by the National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program in the United States. This report has the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) all riled up, as it well ought to. It is entitled *The Interim Assessment of the Causes and Effects of Acid Deposition*. I might say that the phrase "acid deposition" is a way of escaping responsibility for acid rain.

The report says that acid rain might not be such a bad problem and wants things to be more thoroughly documented. It points out, for example, that the farming soils in Canada are not yet ruined by acid rain. If we waited until the soils on the Prairies were acidified, we would have lost them. Imagine replacing all the soil in Canada because it has become acidified. We will have enough trouble with the waters in our lakes and rivers.

The idea that we should wait until it is too late to correct the problem is totally irresponsible, yet that is what this group has suggested. I suggest that the Government itself must bear some responsibility for allowing it to think that that would be acceptable.

The Minister of the Environment called the report voodoo science. There is nothing wrong with the science in the report but it is short-sighted and does not look to the need to implement measures of prevention before it is too late. It is wrong in its application. In fact, it did not consider the Canadian problem at all. It ignored Canada, and the Government has allowed the Americans to do that.

[Translation]

A week ago I was in southern Quebec's Eastern Townships where one third of maple stands have died as a result of acid rain emanating from the United States. Forest decline over there is now far advanced—one third in that region—and the scourge is unrelentless. If one third of trees in the border area are affected, the other regions will be just as badly affected. And perhaps next year half the trees will have died because of acid rain, and again one third or one half in other regions. We cannot afford to wait for an effective remedy against this scourge.

[English]

Acid rain is our number one environmental problem. One half of acid rain in Canada comes from the United States. Yes, we must clean up our own act and we are not doing as much as we should, but in the region of Estrie, more than half the acid rain comes from the United States. This area has not been significantly affected by Ontario emissions. We know that the problem is coming from the United States and that our own Government is not acting strongly.

[Translation]

The environment is a major concern of Canadians. Acid rain is the most urgent problem with respect to Canada's environment.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians want concrete steps to be taken.

• (1815)

[English]

We have had enough of research. It is time we had serious action. The response of the Government to date of just waiting for the Americans, having a chat with the homologue of the Secretary of State for External Affairs is not enough. We need to send a strong and consistent message to the U.S., not just publicity programs. It cannot be botched up by sending a confused message of acceptability of the current state of affairs.

Mr. Ron Stewart (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Government's initiatives on acid rain and respond to the Hon. Member. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) is in Washington today pressing for a reduction in acid rain causing emissions affecting our country. His schedule includes meetings with congressional representatives, environmental organizations, industry, and the administration. I do not call that complacency. The Minister has done more on the environment than any Minister in the past 20 years and is finally getting the U.S. to react. The message he is delivering is clear, simple and reasonable: Canada is taking action to reduce emissions and expects the U.S. to do likewise. Is that a complacent response? I hardly think so.

Our strategy *vis-à-vis* the U.S. is three-pronged. First, we must continue our efforts to convince the administration of the need for a positive response to our proposal for an international agreement to reduce the transboundary flow of emissions. The President's commitment to consider that proposal will be the focus of our efforts in this regard. Resolution of this problem is one of the Government's highest priorities, and I mean highest. Every effort has been made to this end. We have the Prime Minister's repeated personal interventions, representations by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and the Minister of the Environment, and lobbying by the all-Party Special Committee on Acid Rain. Every effort will continue to be made in pursuit of an agreement.