

Pollution Control

If so, is the minister preparing to put before cabinet specific proposals toward that end, and when might we expect an announcement in that regard?

Mr. Roberts: Madam Speaker, I think I will reply briefly to the hon. member in two ways. Yes, I think we do have a very good capacity within the department, but it is also useful for us from time to time to hire outside consultants who can bring in specific expertise and knowledge which may not be readily available.

The second point I would like to make to the hon. member in response to the direct question in his statement today is that it is true that the previous government made commitments in principle. I think the hon. member will find that the funding of acid rain research by this government will exceed the commitments which were contemplated by the previous government.

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my successor in the Department of the Environment for the interest he has been taking not only in his department but also in this very vital matter. I know that he and I are in absolute agreement that it is going to require the co-operation of all Canadians in order to solve it.

I would like to ask a couple of specific questions. In January two working groups were established. One was a strategy group chaired by a representative from the province of Quebec. The other was a technical and scientific group chaired by a representative of the province of Ontario. Then there was an over-all steering committee chaired by myself as federal minister of the environment, as I then was, the minister of the environment from Quebec, the minister of the environment of Ontario and a minister representing the maritime provinces.

Is that basic structure continuing and, if so, where does the federal-Ontario task force with respect to Inco itself fit into that structure? I wonder if the minister might help the House understand just how the structure is proceeding and whether it has been maintained.

While I am on my feet I would like to put another question to the minister. It is interesting that the discussion today has involved only one company. As the minister well knows, while Inco is a significant producer of sulphur emissions, it is not, by any stretch of the imagination, the only producer of sulphur emissions in Canada. In addition to that, as the minister knows, the acid rain problem involves more than just sulphur. In fact, there is evidence which certainly was available to me—and I am sure that the new minister has been made aware of it—that nitrogen emissions are becoming an increasingly large part of the acidic precipitation problem.

I noticed that the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) confined his remarks only to sulphur, whereas in fact in Canada, as in the United States, the nitrogen oxide problem is now contributing very significantly, we think, to the over-all acidic precipitation problem.

I wonder if the minister could direct the first part of his answer to the question of the structure of this task force and how it fits in, and the second part of his answer to the question

about other sources of emission. Particularly, what can we do about the increasing problem of nitrogen, which is something we cannot just blame all on Inco?

Mr. Roberts: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question; I hope I will be able to respond to all its parts. It gives me a chance, which I did not have when the hon. member was attacking me yesterday, to pay tribute to his work as minister in the environment portfolio. Much of what I am now doing is a continuation of the efforts which he has already made. I know that he and I share a very strong concern about these problems, and from time to time I will be seeking his counsel as well as his questions in the House.

I will try to respond to his specific questions. The structure has not been changed. He described it accurately, and we will be continuing with that structure. The committee which has been described, however, will be a special committee between Ontario and Canada. I am sure that the information which is produced will filter through the system, but technically speaking it will be a separate committee.

We have mentioned today specifically Inco, although there was a reference in my remarks to the Falconbridge situation, and we will be considering in the committee other sources of emissions. The hon. member is quite right—and I am dealing, I think, with his fourth point—that we are extremely concerned not simply about sulphur dioxide but also about nitrogen emissions. That is a particular concern in relation to thermal plants as sources of pollution. We are aware of that problem; we are concerned about it. The order that the hon. Harry Parrott has issued today does deal with sulphur dioxide emissions. However, the hon. member is quite right in suggesting that nitrogen oxides are equally a serious problem, and it is one to which we will be paying a great deal of attention.

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts) concerning the task force. I assume that the objective of the task force is to make recommendations to reduce or ultimately to eliminate the problem of acid rain. I was wondering if it is within the scope of the task force to look at methods of reducing the potential of the fuel that goes into the production, say, of energy or into the refining processes such as those Inco use to remove the sulphur dioxide from the product before it is used. I think the example used was coal scrubbing whereby the byproduct is used for fertilizer, and also it removes the sulphur dioxide from the coal before being used in the plant. I was wondering whether these preventative measures are within the scope of the task force.

● (1600)

Mr. Roberts: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but I was distracted for a moment in the middle of the question; I am not sure that I understood its full purport.

The scope of the task force is to examine both the capacity to use practicably the present techniques which are available or new ones which may be refined. Also it will deal with a variety of larger issues. It extends quite widely. If I properly