



Statements and Speeches

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ACID RAIN: A SERIOUS BILATERAL ISSUE

An Address by the Honourable John Roberts, Minister of the Environment, to the Air Pollution Control Association, New Orleans, June 21, 1982

My 1980 speech was devoted to a single topic, acid rain. It was a call to action, it stressed the urgency of dealing with a problem that you as experts are all too familiar with, and it was a plea for both our countries to jointly meet the environmental challenges that confront us in the Eighties. I sincerely wish that I could come to New Orleans and offer congratulations all around on the wonderful job that is being done to combat the menace of acid rain. Unfortunately, this is impossible.

In Canada we are deeply disappointed with the state of negotiations between my country and the United States government on acid rain. The foot dragging and interference in the development of scientific information has reached frustrating proportions. The Administration's rejection of our proposal to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions in eastern North America by 50 per cent by 1990 and a clear indication that it may be some considerable period of time before it will be able even to begin to discuss control actions, is a bitter pill for us to swallow.

The latest obstacles, which occurred less than one week ago at a negotiating session in Ottawa, are forcing us to an agonizing reappraisal of the usefulness of continuing discussions.

Our emission-reduction proposal was drawn from the same science that U.S. negotiators have drawn diametrically opposed conclusions. On a *per capita* basis, our proposal is more costly to Canadians than to Americans. We are willing to put our money where our mouth is. I can only conclude that the values and factors influencing Canadian decision-making are considerably different from those in the U.S.

Some of you must think that I am beginning to sound like a broken record. Shall I reiterate the grim facts for you? That in our province of Ontario a recent survey showed 48 per cent of 2 000 lakes surveyed to be very sensitive to acid rain. That, conservatively, in Norway and Sweden, fish life has been destroyed in more than 6 500 lakes. That, according to a Congressional study, one out of every four streams and lakes in the northeastern United States has already been damaged by acid rain. That evidence continues to mount as to the multi billion dollar threat that acid rain poses to our soils and forests, even to our buildings and monuments.

My arguments in Montreal in 1980 were encapsulated in an October 16, 1981, editorial in the *Washington Post*:
