

Pollution Control

Presumably these consultations have also involved to some extent formal channels, machinery and procedures.

Thus I question whether such a task force is anything especially innovative, however welcome it might be. It also begs the questions, for example, of who will head it, who will comprise it, what will be its specific terms of reference, to whom will it report. I hope the minister will be forthcoming with information along those lines.

The minister has stated his priority to reach a fairly early agreement with the United States on the control of acid rain on both sides of the border. I welcome that priority. He suggested in his statement that the United States has proposed a number of consultative groups and a bilateral arrangement by which the two governments will consult, will keep one another informed, and will exchange views, leading it is hoped to an agreement of the sort I just described. My reservation is that the minister may be so preoccupied with the machinery, the formality and the procedure involved that time will be lost in actually getting the agreement accomplished that we desperately need. The minister has implied that that particular U.S. proposal will be reviewed carefully by him. I hope he will do just that.

The bilateral agreement between the United States and Canada is what we all want. There is some danger, though, that while we proceed to the agreement, time will be lost in preventing acid rain pollution from increasing.

I hope the minister will honour his commitment to seek some interim measures designed not only to prevent acid rain pollution from increasing, but also to reverse it. In that connection, I suggest that Canada must negotiate from a position of strength and that the strongest part of our foundation in negotiations with the United States must be a solid data base on acid rain pollution.

● (1540)

We require information of various kinds. For example, we need to know more about the different sources of acid rain, about how fast damage from acid rain occurs, and about the extent to which acid rain pollution is irreversible. In that connection, I would remind the minister that the former minister, who was so concerned about the problem, was able to secure from his colleagues in cabinet an agreement in principle on a substantial increase in funding for acid rain research. This priority was conveyed to the head of the U.S. environmental protection agency in January, 1980. Such a commitment was very important because it showed the strength of Canada's resolve to deal with acid rain pollution within its own borders.

The other day in the House, last Tuesday I believe it was, I addressed a question to the Minister of the Environment asking him in clear terms whether his government recognized acid rain research as a high priority and whether it planned to honour the commitment made by the previous government to increase funding for research in that crucial area. Mr. Speaker, I did not get an answer, nor have we been able to get much other information from the minister with regard to this serious

problem, one which calls for a great deal of federal leadership. I hope that in future a lot more information and leadership will be forthcoming than we have seen to date at the national level.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I must confess I was not aware that when ministers in the Ontario legislature make statements of intent with regard to legislation and regulation they have some way of seeing that the matter is brought to the attention of the House of Commons. I think that is wonderful; I wish it could be done in every instance.

I was reading with interest a copy of the statement the minister made and I must say it would have been very helpful if the control order had been in our hands so that we could determine exactly what the minister of the environment in Ontario means to do and the measures through which he intends to enforce the new regulations he proposes to put in place. As I read the statement, it says the new order is intended primarily to ensure that there is no increase in sulphur dioxide emissions from Inco or Sudbury. I must confess that in my view a commitment not to increase the sulphur dioxide emissions is hardly a commitment at all.

The statement goes on to say that most of the province of Ontario, at least the southern part, is suffering considerably as a result of the acid rain which results from the emissions in Sudbury and it points out that these emissions account for approximately 30 per cent of all the emissions in Ontario and for 25 per cent of the sulphur deposited in the Ottawa area.

With this in mind, to say that the new control order is designed to guarantee that pollution will not be increased hardly speaks to the problem at all. I am sure there are people in the Ontario legislature who might well be bringing to the minister's attention that he ought to be putting forward a much more forceful provision which would guarantee that this part of Ontario will no longer suffer at the hands of International Nickel, a company which, incidentally, has the wherewithal in its corporate structure to take whatever steps are necessary, at whatever financial cost, to eliminate, at least to all intents and purposes sulphur dioxide emissions.

Another part of the minister's statement which I found interesting had to do with the intent of the order, which was to ensure that reductions reflect present development in production processes. I see the minister's brows are being furrowed. He will read in the second paragraph that it is the intent of the new order that reductions reflecting present developments in the production process be implemented in two years. That, of course, when taken together with the original statement that no increase shall occur, leads one to believe we can hardly expect very much by way of a reduction in the output of emissions by International Nickel.

As far as the joint agreement is concerned, I want to say two things. First, to what extent is the Government of Canada prepared to provide money to clean up the mess which already has been created throughout most of southern and southeastern Ontario? Obviously, money will be needed. To what extent will the Government of Canada be prepared to put money into