

We have placed this motion on the Order Paper today with profound regret. We would rather be commending the Government for doing its duty with respect to the environment. We would be glad to applaud the Minister of the Environment and the Prime Minister, but the fact of the matter is that once we remove that for which the Government has been taking credit in the last six months—which is food prepared by the previous Government—one can see a horrendous vacuum.

We can see an intellectual bankruptcy and emotional emptiness. The environment, perhaps more than any other assignment in government and politics, is one that requires passion, commitment and a strong sense of leadership which shows a direction for this nation that will not be deflected by federal-provincial niceties. There is a time when Canada is more than just the sum total of each provincial Government. There is a moment when the health of Canadians is a national concern. That is the theme we are putting before the House and that is why we are so upset about the lack of leadership, indeed the abdication of leadership, on the part of the Government. For those reasons, Canadians are increasingly being turned off by the PC Government. It will not return as the Government, at this rate, come the next election.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault).

[English]

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, during his remarks my colleague referred to the Niagara River toxic pollution problem. He expressed his doubts about the work the Government has done on this particularly tough issue. Would he give us his opinion as to what the Government should do now to improve the situation in the Niagara River?

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, the Government should implement the recommendations contained in the report by the Niagara River toxic chemicals committee that was published last October. There are some 26 or 27 recommendations that were jointly arrived at by the Canadian and American sides. However, only two recommendations were on the American side.

It is a very serious departure from past practices. Evidently there is a political message when only two recommendations are put forward by the American side, which are stalling-type recommendations. Evidently, the Minister must meet with the Environmental Protection Agency, speak up on this matter and take action. She must give her officials the courage and inspiration that they need in order to be effective in negotiations south of the border on this matter of toxic chemicals.

I was stunned to learn that as of April 1, 1985 the \$2.5 million program for toxic chemical management no longer exists. It is gone. I hope the Minister will address that matter.

● (1125)

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I listened with absolute amazement to the former Minister of the Environment who was an

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acknowledged bankrupt in terms of getting anything done during his term of office. It was acknowledged on all sides of the House that no progress was made during his tenure as Minister of the Environment. It was an acknowledged fact that his Ministry, his Government, could not get along with the provinces and that was the reason there were no agreements signed on the transportation of dangerous goods. It was an acknowledged fact that the Canadian Government, under the Liberal Party, fought with the United States and thumbed its nose at the United States at every opportunity, and that was the reason nothing was done. Perhaps the bureaucrats were working hard, but there was absolutely no political will in the Liberal Party to get along with anybody. The Liberals wasted years of opportunities to do important things about acid rain, the environment and the transportation of PCBs. The House should recognize that the fault lies with the lack of political will by the Party that was intellectually bankrupt when it came to matters concerning the environment.

Mr. Gauthier: That is distorting the facts.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to set the record straight concerning some of the questions raised by the Hon. Member. First, the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) spoke of no progress having been made. The fact is that on March 6, 1984, in Ottawa, the federal and provincial Ministers of the Environment arrived at a federal-provincial agreement at that time. They decided to go it alone setting themselves the target of a 50 per cent reduction in pollution by 1994.

The Hon. Member spoke about the fact that we could not get along with the provinces. We got along with the provinces famously, Mr. Speaker. The former Minister of the Environment for Ontario and I worked together 100 per cent all the time. He was a great source of strength to me. I want to recognize publicly his immense role in bringing about that understanding on March 6, 1984. Two weeks later we had the "Ottawa club" being formed when nine European nations came to Ottawa and made a commitment to cut acid rain by at least 30 per cent by 1993. Three months later in Munich, on June 19 approximately, those ten nations became 20, nations that say that by 1990 they will cut acid emissions by 30 per cent.

As for the last allegation of the Hon. Member that we fought with the United States, we spoke plainly with our neighbours. We told them that as Canadians we cannot tolerate waste being dumped on our side of the border because we are downwind to the United States. The United States produces 26 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide every year. We had good reason to be legitimately indignant about that. As a good neighbour one does not dump stuff into one's neighbour's back yard; not even the Hon. Member for Simcoe North would advocate that theory. We said to the United States, come and join us, we will work together because we know that we produce this nasty stuff to the extent of one-sixth of what the United States produces. We said since our waste is damaging the United States because the northeast of the United States is