

# Canada Weekly

Volume 8, No. 28

July 9, 1980



Ottawa, Canada

Joint Canada-U.S. action needed to solve acid rain problem, 1

Mining committee appointed, 3

Satellite image analysis system opens in Victoria, 3

Women aid developing countries, 3

Beaufort offshore drilling program approved, 3

Canadians to circle globe, 4

Canada's architecture praised, 4

New molecule may be key to cheap solar energy, 4

Arctic mine poses unique problems, 5

Foreign ownership of businesses, 6

Bug produces oil, 6

Research and rescue competition, 6

Wine company seeks foreign markets, 6

News of the arts — prizes, music, theatre, 7

News briefs, 8

## Joint Canada-U.S. action needed to solve acid rain problem

*Acid rain is one of the most serious environmental issues facing Canada and the United States, Environment Minister John Roberts told members of the Air Pollution Control Association at their annual meeting held in Montreal June 23.*

*Excerpts from the Minister's speech follow:*

Right now, as I speak in terms of thousands of Canadian lakes — and quite a few American ones — a process is taking place which, if we, Canada and the United States, do not respond as we should, is as inevitable as tomorrow's sunrise. You know what it is. It is the lowering of pH, the increasing of acidity. The process is simple. We know the rain is ten to 40 times as acid as it should be. We know these lakes, because of their geological setting, are poorly buffered, that it is only a matter of time — and for many not much time — until they take on the acidity of the rain. We also know that they do not have to get that acidic — only a pH of five — to lose their ability to sustain normal aquatic life, including fish, and thereby a major tourist and sport and commercial fishing industry. Already in

Ontario alone — where the sensitive regions are much less extensive than in Quebec, or proportionately, our Atlantic provinces — there are 140 lakes which prove the truth of what I am saying. Atlantic salmon streams are also affected. I could take you today to many dead lakes — dead because of what man, not nature, has done. In the United States the number of already dead lakes is greater and in both countries the list is growing.

Many of these lakes contain increasing amounts of toxic heavy metals. Indeed I am told that these metals are what kills the fish in many instances. Those metals are there because the increased acidity in the rain immobilizes them — leaches them out of the soil and into the water. People talk about liming the lakes to restore the pH balance or prevent acidification. In some places in particular circumstances this may well be useful as a temporary expedient. But will it restore the lake to its original chemistry? Our experiments so far suggest not and restocking of fish in some limed lakes has not worked. That sounds to me like irreversible damage, a terrible heritage for our children.

### Damage to vegetation

What of the soil drenched in acid rain or affected by dry deposition which some feel may be more damaging? Their chemistry is changing as surely as I am standing here looking at you. The only real arguments remaining among the scientific community are about the effects of these changes and most of these disputes are over the degree and speed of adverse effect on vegetation growth. Vegetation growth — it's such a neutral sounding expression. In Canada it means forests which sustain our largest single industry. That industry already faces the challenge of the newly expanding com-



Environment Minister John Roberts

One-hundred-and-eighty-seven years ago today...  
The importation of slaves into Upper Canada  
was forbidden.