

FEDERAL LEADERS AND ACID RAIN

In March of this year, federal and provincial environment officials jointly agreed to reduce eastern Canadian sulphur-dioxide emissions by 50% by 1994 as part of continuing Canada's efforts to combat acid rain. This will require substantial reductions in emissions from Inco and Noranda in particular- these two alone were responsible for 34% of eastern Canada's actual 1980 sulphur-dioxide emissions.

A technology called "roast reduction smelting" for Inco and Falconbridge, could have a capital cost of \$430 million (1982 Canadian \$'s) to install. However, due to a world-wide depression in copper and nickel markets and Inco's resulting poor financial position some form of government assistance would be required to help out.

The same is true for the plants at Noranda where the Quebec government is requiring that they build a sulphuric acid manufacturing plant to reduce their emissions by 50% by 1989.

In light of the above the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain polled the federal political leaders for their solutions: asking them what percentage of the capital costs would they be willing to commit their parties to provide, either in the form of low or no-interest loans, grants or other forms of assistance.

Ed Broadbent committed the NDP to actual \$'s in terms of requirements to battle acid rain and would allocate \$250 million to a clean-up programme by non-ferrous smelting industry; and to give 40% of capital costs to Inco and Noranda.

Brian Mulroney and the PC's have all " supported unilateral action by Canada with the provinces to reduce acidic emissions" and a "... substantial federal contribution in order to assist appropriate control measures at certain sites..." However, no dollar value was placed on the programmes- a "wait and see" policy until after the election.

John Turner agreed that some form of assistance was required but he seemed to feel that the financial fortunes of the two companies would improve by the end of the decade (according to an EM&R study) and thus the companies themselves would be able to " afford investment in pollution controls. "...Industry is aware of DRIE's IRDP programme (Industrial and Regional Development Programme), which makes funds available to development and demonstration of new technology for modernisation and emission control..."

The third question asked by the Coalition dealt with automobile emissions and the need to reduce those emissions from the current 3.1 grams per mile to 1 gram per mile of allowable emission -the current U.S. standard. Vehicles manufactured in Canada are already designed to meet U.S. emission standards and thus no expensive "retooling" would be required.

The NDP and the PC's supported immediate implementation of a Canadian emission standard that equal that of the U.S. However, Mr. Turner would not commit his party other than to say that there should be tighter controls but that "... levels and timing of implementation would be determined through public consultation with interested parties..."

extracted from a survey by the
Canadian Coalition for Acid Rain.

(More info on the Coalition's activities is available from Evelyn Meader)

Post Script: In a recent meeting between Brian Mulroney and Ronald Reagan, the topic of Acid Rain was low on the list of priorities. Adele Hurley of the Coalition says there should not be any meetings between the U.S. and Canada where "acid rain is not raised as a significant issue"