Canada Goes It Alone on Acid Rain Controls

Canada says it will wait no longer for the United States to join in a program to reduce acid rain. Instead, it will begin imposing new pollution controls unilaterally. The announcement came on 6 March, a little more than a month after President Ronald Reagan indicated in his state of the union address in January that he would not be proposing anything but research this year.

William D. Ruckelshaus, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, made a plea 1 week before the address for a limited emissions control program. Although the President attended the Ruckelshaus meeting and is reported to have listened attentively, he decided against such a program in the end.

Charles Caccia, Canada's minister of the environment, told the press: "We will proceed independently of the United States in the hope that they will join us at the earliest possible date." The Canadian government had already set a goal of reducing industrial air pollution (SO_2 and NO_x emissions) by 25 percent. Now the goal is to be 50 percent. But it is merely a goal, as Elizabeth Barratt-Brown of the Natural Resources Defense Council points out. In order to bring a tangible change, the government must set deadlines and penalties for noncompliance. Canada has not done this.

The United States and Canada signed a Memorandum of Intent in 1980 pledging to cooperate in describing the problem of acid rain and taking measures to control it. When the Reagan Administration came into office, officials began to back away from the enforcement part of the agreement. In 1982, Canada proposed reducing sulfur emissions by 50 percent. U.S. officials declared this idea "premature," and since then have said the problem is too poorly understood to be attacked by regulatory action.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. Senate, the Environment and Public Works Committee voted 14 to 2 in favor of a tough acid rain control bill. The vote came on 7 March on revising the Clean Air Act to require a 40 percent reduction of SO_2 emissions by 1994. Environmentalists were pleased because this represents a 25 percent tougher standard than set out in a 1982 bill proposed by the committee.

On 28 February the National Governors Association also endorsed strong action, recommending a 40 percent reduction in 10 years.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

EPA Proposes Change in Air Pollutants Regulation

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator William Ruckelshaus last week proposed a major change in the regulation of air pollutants such as dust, soot, dirt, and smoke. The proposal is likely to spark a heated debate between environmentalists and industry.

Since 1971, EPA has judged air quality in terms of the presence of *all* particles in air, regardless of their size. Under the new plan, the agency would regulate only small particles, those which are 10 micrometers or smaller. EPA wants to focus on the control of the smaller particles because their ability to penetrate deeply into the lungs renders them potentially more hazardous.

EPA has not yet decided what concentration of 10-micrometer particles will be permitted, but the limit will lie between 150 and 250 micrograms per cubic meter of air. At a news conference, Ruckelshaus said he favored the lower limit, but industry is likely to press for a higher value. David D. Doniger, a representative of the National Clean Air Coalition, says that the lower limit would be roughly equivalent to current EPA regulations, but that the higher limit would be significantly weaker.

Ruckelshaus said that some areas of the country might have to develop new controls to conform to the new criteria, but he declined to speculate on the economic impact of the plan. The Clean Air Act states that the EPA administrator must base the air quality standard on health considerations alone, excluding economic factors. According to Doniger, sources that emit small particles include the steel industry, electric power plants, and diesel-fueled vehicles.

—MARJORIE SUN

Sweden Boosts R & D Spending

The Swedish government has announced that, despite broad cuts being imposed elsewhere in government spending to help meet the country's current economic difficulties, it is planning to provide a substantial increase in support to research and development over the next 3 years.

The government's annual research budget of $1.2 billion—already 2.5 percent of the gross national product—is planned to rise 2 percent a year faster than the anticipated rise in research costs due to inflation. This will be done at the time when all other government departments are having to cut their budgets by the same proportion.

According to deputy prime minister Ingvar Carlsson, particular emphasis will be given to increased funding for basic research, although primarily that related to technological goals. The areas targeted for such support will be decided in consultations with the private sector, which will also be encouraged to raise support for its own research activities.

Like several other European countries, the Swedish government has chosen to give particular support for long-term research in the fields of information technology, new materials, and biotechnology. Less common is its decision to add a fourth priority area to the list—environmental protection.

The government also intends to introduce various measures aimed at increasing access by Swedish scientists to the results of research carried out in other countries, including a significant increase in the resources made available to the scientific and technical attachés to the Swedish embassies in foreign capitals.

As a further measure designed to help encourage the flow of scientific knowledge into Sweden, a special study will be carried out of ways in which the tax burden can be reduced on foreign scientists working in the country. At present, many Swedish companies complain that the country's high rate of personal taxation makes it difficult for them to attract top-rate scientists from abroad.

—DAVID DICKSON