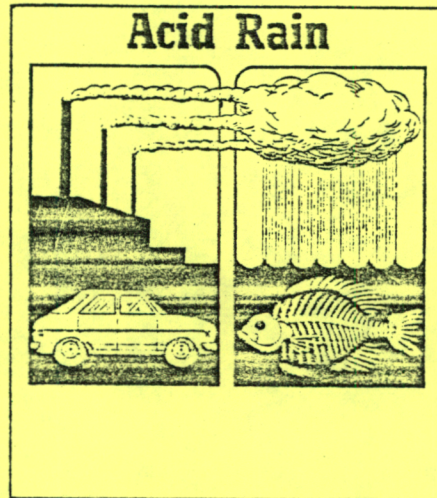


ACTION SEMINAR ON ACID RAIN



The Action Seminar on Acid Precipitation (ASAP) held in Toronto November 1 to 3, 1979 focussed citizen attention to the problem of our increasingly acidic rainfall. The conference recognized that acid precipitation has already caused marked and dramatic damage to ecosystems and regional economies. Hundreds of lakes have been rendered lifeless and sport fisheries have been decimated. Agriculture, tourism and forest industries as well as the public health and welfare of citizens throughout the continent are now threatened.

At present the sulphur and nitrogen oxides in the atmosphere contribute directly to rain and snow fall (plus dry fallout) which is at least fifty times more acidic than normal. It is expected that acid precipitation will continue to increase as Canadian and American industries shift to a greater reliance on coal. Unfortunately existing air quality standards and legal requirements are inadequate to control the problem. While Canadian and American governments have recognized the need for an international approach to the problem, as yet no specific terms have been agreed to.

Among resolutions passed by conference participants was a call for the reduction of atmospheric loads of sulphur and nitrogen oxides to less than 50 % of present levels within ten years. It was recommended that energy conservation and renewable energy resource development be given highest priority in national energy policies and that use of coal be permitted only in carefully controlled situations. The conference urged Canada and the United States to reduce air pollution through adoption and enforcement of stringent emission control strategies. Furthermore, it asked that a committee of citizens from both countries be established to monitor and publicly report on each country's record of compliance.

Of particular interest to Islanders is a resolution that techniques such as increased stack height, designed to disperse emission in space or time, should be prohibited. In recent years increasing stack height has become a common way to reduce air pollution levels near the source. While air becomes cleaner in towns and cities nearby, pollutants from the high stacks are released into upper cloud layers where they may be transported long distances before falling as acid rain. Thus, much of the acid precipitation falling over the Maritimes originates in the highly industrialized central parts of the United States and Canada and is transported to us by northeastwardly moving weather systems.