

The public is concerned with a different—and more pragmatic—set of values than most professional workers when it comes to gaging effectiveness of control efforts. It matters little to a citizen, for example, to be informed of progress being made in conducting research and in drafting comprehensive plans if year after year he sees no diminution of paunch manure being discharged from an abattoir or oil from a steel mill.

Distressing as it may be to shift efforts from systematic investigations and preparation of reports to the more mundane tasks of field inspection and prompt challenging of violations, the fact is that no function of a regulatory agency is more vital—or neglected today—than such activities. Small wonder, therefore, that the public fails to comprehend exactly what it is that control agencies are doing.

In brief, there is a policing job to be done. Aside from the virtues that this holds in furthering abatement of obvious pollution, it enhances opportunities to assure a proper return from the huge investments already made for the construction of treatment facilities. It is common knowledge that these plants, in the absence of routine inspection, often fail to produce results they are designed to achieve.

Unless the States do make the choice of improving their capability to carry on day-by-day operating responsibilities there would seem to be no alternative but that this burden be shouldered by the Federal authorities. Let it be noted that the Federal Government has already initiated in a few States routine "performance audits" of those municipal sewage-treatment plants that have been built with the aid of a Federal grant. If the States had been adequately handling this basic regulatory function there would be small reason for Federal inspectors.

In connection with both the Lake Michigan and Lake Erie Federal enforcement conferences, it was made quite clear that, if the States involved lacked the capability for establishing and maintaining surveillance of discharges from entities under their jurisdiction, the Federal authorities would be prepared to do so.

All of this suggests there is a vital area wherein the States can unqualifiedly find room to assert and exercise responsibilities.

Federal role

The philosophy and wording of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act rather nicely conforms to the view that it should be the policy of the National Government to supplement—not supersede—the responsibilities of the States. It is in the execution of this act from which evidence continues to multiply indicating that the authority, if not the existence, of the State agencies may be jeopardized.

Such situations command candid examination, in view of the increasing evidence of conflict on what constitutes appropriate Federal responsibilities. They should not be lightly disposed of as simply "politically motivated." The opportunities presented to the National Government to supplement and abet local and State efforts are enunciated in the Water Pollution Control Act. They include financial support to municipalities for construction of sewage treatment facilities; grants-in-aid to States for upgrading administration; conduct of research and training activities; and the development of comprehensive river basin studies.