

*The Ruhr district*

The Ruhr district comprises six river basins each under the control of a water authority, the *genossenschaft*. From south to north on the right bank of the Rhine, the basins are those of the Wupper, Ruhr (itself), Emscher, and Lippe. More or less parallel to the left bank lies a district of small streams tributary to the Rhine, and next the River Niers, which spills across the Dutch border into the Meuse.

The whole Ruhr district has an area of 4,200 square miles (compared with the Ohio River Basin of 154,000 square miles). It is slightly smaller than the State of Connecticut. The largest community is Essen, with about three-quarters of a million inhabitants. The total population is some 7.5 million.

The first special act created the Emscher *Genossenschaft* in 1904. The term "*genossenschaft*" literally means "fellowship" or a close association for common benefit. The creation of this institution was the result of mounting abuses of the stream, accompanied by court actions by downstream complainants. The same concepts of association for a common purpose were subsequently given full expression in the organization and mandates of all six river basin authorities of the Ruhr area. All of these were ratified by the appropriate legislative councils and the chambers of parliament in the period between 1904 and 1930. The special law establishing the Emscher *Genossenschaft* was so well drafted that in substance it was the pattern for all succeeding river basin authorities administratively responsible for pollution abatement and water management in general.

The legal structure of these "associations" was designed to let them investigate, plan, design, construct, operate, maintain, repair, and replace all necessary installations or engineering works for the abatement of the basin's waters. The task was to be accomplished in cooperation and codetermination with all public and private corporations or persons that were themselves polluters or drew benefits from proposed improvements. Financing took the form of public loans for capital improvements and internal allocation of operating expenses to the members of the association, insofar as expenses were not covered by income.

The administrative machinery consists of three groups: (1) The assembly, (2) the board of directors, and (3) the board of appeals. Two categories of membership are recognized: associates or fellows, and participants. Associates are the municipal and rural administrative districts that empty all or part of their waters into the rivers. The participants are mines, other industrial enterprises, railroads, and the like, and public administrative bodies other than the municipal and rural districts, principally communes.

Modifications of these compositions of membership are to be found in some of the districts, where special conditions prevail. For example, in the Lippeverband, special associates are the Federal Republic, the proprietor of the barge canals; the state, responsible for the upkeep of riverbanks; and the waterworks and levee associations.

The governing organ is the assembly. Its delegates are in proportion to annual financial contribution. No single membership category, no matter how large its proportionate contribution, may out-vote the others. The board of directors is the active manager of the business.