about \$2.30 a year for each of the area's residents, which would work out to a figure of about \$450 million for the nation. This probably understates things, however, as Los Angeles does not have as much heavy industry of the air-polluting type as some other areas. But despite this qualification, it is evident that U.S. industry could achieve standards of cleanliness like those of Los Angeles for far less than the \$50-billion to \$75-billion estimate given last year by a corporate witness at a Senate hearing.

To this \$1 billion a year must be added the \$600 million it might cost to remove sulfur dioxide from the flue gases of the utilities, the \$800 million it could cost to apply all the foreseeable controls to the automobile, and the \$350 million cost of ensuring soot-free rubbish disposal. These would boost the price of cleaner air to about \$2.75 billion a year. Even if a few other items are tossed in—such as a ban on the use of high-sulfur fuel for home heating, programs to reduce the oxides of nitrogen emitted by electric utilities and to deodorize diesel exhausts, more research, and a fivefold step-up in state and local enforcement activities—it is difficult to see how the total could greatly exceed \$3 billion a year. And this estimate makes almost no allowance for offsetting savings to industry from the recovery of marketable products. Also, it assumes there will be no major cost-cutting breakthroughs in controlling sulfur dioxide or in cleaning up automobile exhaust—an assumption that could turn out to be unduly pessimistic. This program will not buy city air as pure as that which greeeted the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Rock. But it would reduce total pollution by at least two-thirds, so that we would only occasionally be aware of it.

For \$1.30 a month each, we could all breathe easier.

Keeping out the feds

Unfortunately, American industry does not have a record it can be proud of in the abatement of pollution. Many corporations are reluctant to clean up voluntarily so long as their competitors in areas with weak or nonexistent air-pollution enforcement are going scot free. And the idea of a uniform clampdown across the nation is anathema to most industrial spokesmen. Conditions vary from place to place, they argue. New York's air is high in dust and sulfur dioxide but low in automotive smog, while Los Angeles' situation was the opposite. Therefore, they say, it is wasteful to crack down uniformly on all pollutants in all cities. In rebuttal, however, some experts point out that it made sense for Los Angeles, which had lower sulfur dioxide readings than most cities, to curb emissions of this damaging gas as well.

Impatient with industry's progress, some economists have been exploring ways to speed it up. A special committee under Gardner Ackley, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, has been considering the feasibility of imposing a scale of charges on companies that pollute the air. Tax concessions in the form of faster write-offs, and a doubling of investment credits when equipment for controlling pollution is installed, have also been suggested. But a system of charges would be incredibly complicated to administer because of the difficulty of identifying and metering aerial contamination. Tax concessions, which in effect are subsidies, are objectionable because they amount to bribing companies to be good citizens; the federal government might as well arrange a payment to every child who refrains from dropping candy wrappers in the street. The experience of Los Angeles, where no economic gimmicks were employed, shows what can be accomplished by local enforcement.

Washington's role, in fact, can be a limited one. It seems clear, from industry's dismal record, that national standards for emission are needed for every industrial process. The federal government is best equipped to carry on the research needed to establish these standards. Their actual enforcement, however, can best be done by state and local governments. The federal government has limited policing powers under the 1963 law, and can intervene in interstate air-pollution situations if localities move too slowly (about 40 million people live in urban zones that straddle state lines), or in an intrastate situation if the governor requests it. But the main federal contribution to enforcement should be money. In the past year, when matching grants from Washington have become available for the first time, they have brought a 47 percent increase in the budgets of state and local air-pollution control agencies. Federal money spent in this way is far more potent than direct subsidies would be, and much less of it will be needed.