

STATEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, RESEARCH,
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COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PRACTICE IN WATER QUALITY
CONTROL

Since public policy in the field of water pollution control in the United States is in the process of undergoing a number of significant changes, there seems to be value in reviewing pollution control policy in other nations. This might help us to gain a better perspective concerning activities in this country.

While there is a dearth of statistical information concerning pollution and pollution control progress in other nations, general reports from many of the European nations indicate that there has been a significant increase in stream pollution during the last half century. It is, for example, reported that in 1875, 100,000 salmon were delivered to the retail trade in the Netherlands. Between 1900 and 1915 there were only 20,000 to 30,000 per year. Toward 1930 the salmon fishery on the Rhine had lost all practical significance and its revival under present circumstances appears to be out of the question.¹ Some European pollution appears to be more recent; for example, in 1954 the Grand-Morin, a tributary of the Marne, which drains part of the Paris basin, was reported to have been a trout stream. "Today the river is dead and covered with filthy rainbow-colored greases and hydrocarbons. Less than 10 years were needed for this."²

THE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO POLLUTION PROBLEMS

The public response to such pollution problems and to fish kills seems to follow a similar pattern throughout the world. Here is a report from Poland:

Recently in an artificial lake in Poland, where the waste matter—containing a fungus that deoxygenized the water—discharged by a sugar refinery caused the death of some 20 tons of fry. The press called the lake the graveyard of millions of fish. There was one good point: the public indignation at the news which gave the event greater significance than the actual economic loss, and provided conclusive evidence that the whole community was awake to the problem. Legal action has been taken against the culprits.³

The Polish-Anglers Union now has over 200,000 members and is a leading opponent of water-polluting industries.

As is the case in the United States, many voluntary organizations concerned with water conservation are being formed in Europe. During the last 15 years, voluntary water protection associations were

¹ J. J. Hopmans, "The Importance of the River Rhine for the Water Economy of the Netherlands," Rhine-Seminar, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva, 1963, p. 181.

² Report of Senator M. Maurice Lalloy, to the French Senate, No. 155, Paris, 1964, p. 28.

³ Joseph Litwin, "Control of River Pollution by Industry," International Association of Legal Science, International Institute of Administrative Sciences, 25 Rue Charité, Brussels, Belgium, p. 12.