

water for its sewage treatment requirements and possibly imperil shipping interests throughout the Great Lakes? Should New York City be permitted to tap the headwaters of the Delaware River to the possible detriment of downstream industrial users?

Other conflicts concern water allocation to similar groups of users. Within metropolitan areas, there is competition for sources of both surface and ground water as well as for streams to carry away sewage effluents. Such competition is often centered in suburban areas whose limited resources make them heavily dependent on nearby surface or ground water supplies. Also on the increase are conflicts for water between different metropolitan areas. Thus Dallas and Fort Worth, rivals on many issues, have united to resist the efforts of Houston to tap a river considered vital to future development of the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Most of these conflicts are not merely the result of inadequate communications or a failure to plan. In most areas where such conflicts arise, there are not sufficient quantities of water at comparable prices and quality to supply all users. The stakes for the contestants in terms of protecting investments and insuring future development are tremendous. Competition for the use of existing supplies of water will always exist; it is not likely to be eliminated through indefinite expansion of supply or through the perfection of planning and administrative devices.

Often there is a facile assumption that if planning were intensified, the structure of decisionmaking overhauled, and intergovernmental responsibilities more carefully specified, consensus and solutions would follow with ease. Such hopes are usually unfounded. Only rarely will a plan or policy for water use appeal to all parties. To the contestants in water politics, each level of government is a different arena, with varying advantages and disadvantages for different participants and the resolution of differing issues.

It is unrealistic to expect even the best governmental procedures to eliminate conflicts between different interest groups. If governments are to provide needed services, however, they must be able to cope with conflict, mediate between different interest groups, and reach acceptable compromises as a basis for action. Governmental arrangements are deficient if they fail to consider relevant interests when decisions are made, or if they lead to inaction in the face of legitimate needs. Examples of both these situations occur with disappointing frequency in the case of water supply and sewage disposal.

THE NATIONAL WATER PROBLEM

The total quantity of water available in the United States is constant. For centuries, 30 inches of annual rainfall have been producing an average of 4,300 billion gallons of water per day. Approximately 14 percent of this water, about 600 billion gallons per day from both surface and ground sources, is usable.

The demands placed upon this constant supply have mounted steadily. In 1900 less than 8 percent of the 600 billion gallons per day was needed for all water uses. Today's requirements exceed 300 billion gallons per day. Less than 10 percent of this water is used in urban areas. Municipal water use averages about 147 gal-