

Inadequate investment is even more critical with respect to sewage treatment facilities. Estimates by various study groups and agencies give a graphic picture of the sewage treatment investment lag. In 1956, the Committee on Public Works of the U.S. House of Representatives estimated that sewage treatment works and interceptor sewers to overcome the 1955 backlog would cost in excess of \$1.9 billion. The committee forecast that during 1955-1965 replacement of obsolete sewage treatment facilities would involve another \$1.7 billion, and treatment works to meet population increases could be expected to require an additional investment of approximately \$1.7 billion.⁵ Four years later, in a report prepared for the Senate's Select Committee on National Water Resources, the U.S. Public Health Service found the backlog needs unchanged at \$1.9 billion. This study also estimated that \$900 million would be required to replace obsolescent facilities and \$1.8 billion to handle the wastes of population increments during the period 1958-1965.⁶ Early in 1962 the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare called for \$6 billion over the next 10 years to eliminate the backlog, replace obsolete units, and serve expected population increases.⁷

In 1960 the backlog involved almost 20 million people living in communities which have never provided treatment for their wastes. Approximately 2,900 new sewage treatment works are needed in these communities. Another 1,100 new plants are required to serve the 3.4 million people in areas with overloaded or obsolete facilities. According to the same estimates, 1,630 additional communities, with a population of 25 million, have treatment facilities, requiring enlargement or modernizing.⁸ The Conference of State Sanitary Engineers recently confirmed these findings, reporting that 5,290 communities had inadequate sewage treatment facilities. This need is largely concentrated in small communities. Over 90 percent of the deficiencies reported by the Conference of State Sanitary Engineers were in communities of less than 10,000.⁹

The unwillingness of local communities to increase their expenditures to provide for water and sewer utilities is the crux of the problem of inadequate investment. There is much less resistance to investing local funds in water supply. The investment lag in water storage and distribution facilities is more a product of the lack of construction during World War II and the Korean war, rising costs, material shortages, and rapid population growth than voter resistance. The story is quite different with respect to sewage treatment works, as William L. Rivers noted in the historical context of urban water and sewer development:

Much of the foot dragging by municipalities can be explained by an axiom of local politics: building a water treatment plant to clean up the water used by voting citizens is almost always easy to accomplish; however, a sewage plant

⁵ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Public Works, *Extending and Strengthening the Water Pollution Control Act*, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 1956, H. Rept. 2190, p. 3.

⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, *Water Resource Activities in the United States: Water Quality Management*, 86th Cong., 2d sess., 1960, Committee Print No. 24, p. 11.

⁷ Wilbur J. Cohen and Jerome N. Sonosky, "Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1961," *Public Health Reports*, LXXVII (February 1962), p. 111.

⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, *Water Resource Activities: Water Quality Management*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁹ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, *Problems in Financing Sewage Treatment Facilities* (Washington, 1962), p. 1.