

Air pollution is clearly a significant problem both in the District of Columbia and the Washington metropolitan area. As you know, Mr. Chairman, Secretary Gardner has called for Federal action to help deal with the interstate aspects of this problem. Within the next few months, we expect to hold an abatement conference, at which Federal, State and local representatives will have an opportunity to participate in the development of recommendations for controlling sources of interstate air pollution throughout the metropolitan area. Other opportunities to plan an effective attack on the Washington area's air pollution problems already exist. The activities of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments are a continuing source of such opportunities. The Solid Waste Management Conference held last month by the Public Health Service provided a forum for examining ways to deal with one of the important classes of air pollution sources in the Washington area—the disposal of refuse by open burning and incineration.

In short, air pollution in the Washington area is beginning to receive the high degree of attention it so clearly demands. This is indeed encouraging. But we must bear in mind that the extent to which attention will be translated into action will depend in very large measure on the activities of the State and local governments in the Washington area; unless they are all prepared to develop and carry on effective programs for the prevention and control of air pollution, the opportunities for progress toward cleaner air will be largely missed.

There can be no doubt that the District of Columbia is ill-prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. The current program for the prevention and control of air pollution in the District of Columbia is clearly inadequate, in considerable measure because the existing statutory authority for the program is obsolete. For the most part, air pollution control activities in the District are conducted under the provisions of a law passed more than 30 years ago.

Since then, the population of the District has jumped from 486,000 to 800,000. This growth has led in turn to greatly increased demands for heat and electric power; at the same time, the use of motor vehicles and production of refuse have both increased at faster rates than the population. These trends have helped to create air pollution problems of much greater magnitude and complexity than any which existed 30 years ago.

Of equal importance is the vast change that has taken place in scientific and public awareness of the dimensions of urban air pollution problems. In the 1930's, most law dealing with air pollution, including that in the District, were intended almost entirely for the abatement of visible smoke and only to the extent that such smoke constituted a nuisance. But we know now that smoke is just part of the total air pollution problem and, most importantly, the air pollution is not a mere nuisance but, rather, a serious threat to our health and welfare.

The statute passed 30 years ago in the District of Columbia simply does not provide an adequate basis for dealing with the modern air pollution problem in all its complex ramifications. A new statute clearly is needed if the District of Columbia is to succeed in attacking its existing air pollution problem and in preventing that problem from worsening.