

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1968

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND ASTRONAUTICS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMENT,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to adjournment, at 10 a.m., in room 2325, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C., Hon. Emilio Q. Daddario (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DADDARIO. This meeting will come to order.

Today's testimony will deal with air pollution. The Air Quality Act of 1967 establishes a sequence of activities leading finally to enforcement of emission restrictions in order to assure the sort of air quality which society chooses to have. The first step is to promulgate criteria; that is, descriptions of the way in which pollutants damage the environment. Not only is this the first step toward clean air but it seems to be the most difficult to achieve.

There are, of course, pollution problems where the criteria can be established with little trouble and with little help from science. Pittsburgh and St. Louis citizens could decide to eliminate particulate matter from the air on the basis of what their eyes have told them to do about sources and effects which are visible.

Los Angeles inhabitants need no instruments to gage the level of eye irritating oxidants in the atmosphere. However, as the monitoring of urban air composition has proceeded in the past few years some contaminants have been identified which produce no immediate effect on human senses. They are invisible to the citizen. By their chemical nature these contaminants are inferred to react with materials, plants, and within the body, but we must count on science to tell us when we are being exposed to these pollutants and what the response will be in terms of health and welfare.

Therefore the new law makes the scientific basis of criteria, as I see it, the first order of business. The responsibility is squarely on the scientific community and research management to produce sufficient facts for administrative judgment.

Unfortunately science policy issues are abundant in which scientists do not agree with one another. Regardless of the eventual reconciliation inherent in the scientific method, this subcommittee has witnessed some pretty ragged arguments among technical people.

Air quality criteria is no exception. We are not so much interested in the pros and cons on a particular pollutant as we are in the ability of environmental epidemiology to resolve these matters. I believe there may be a danger that the Air Quality Act will be prevented from