

NCAR's strong and responsive relations with university-based science and education, and the subcommittee paid special attention to the sponsoring and governing roles of UCAR, the parent consortium of universities.

7. *Institutional arrangements and alternatives.*—A national institute of ecology is so clearly in the national interest, and would so obviously be dependent on contractual relations with the federal government for much of its funding, that the plan for an independent, private research agency may seem to usurp the prerogatives of government. Federal laboratories for the study of life in environment already exist. Many members of the Ecological Society work in them. Could not one of these be enlarged, or several of them be linked together, to accomplish the objectives of a national institute? The idea has much appeal, especially to foreigners familiar with such research arms of national governments as the Natural Environment Research Council (UK), the C.S.I.R.O., the D.S.I.R., and many others.

Only a little familiarity with U.S. federal research is needed, however, for the idea to lose much of its charm. Which federal laboratory or agency might assume the functions that ecologists have in mind? To which department should it be attached? Ecologists note with mingled amusement and despair that polluted water "belongs" to Interior, polluted air "belongs" to HEW, polluted soil "belongs" to USDA, while AEC, potentially the most dangerous polluter of all three environments, is the chief federal sponsor of research on ecosystems. All these agencies have responsibility for action programs, for surveillance, and for enforcement of policies. In this context, fundamental research rarely carries highest priority when funds are reduced.

No disrespect is intended by these remarks. Federal scientific research is excellent science. There are many good reasons for the situation that exists, and there is a great variety of coordinating devices. But it seemed to the subcommittee, after some reflection (and much first-hand familiarity with several kinds of federal support for ecology) that no government agency is (or no new government agency can long remain) nimble enough, far-sighted enough, or in close enough touch with the universities where the nation's real scientific strength lies, to substitute for an independent national institute of ecology.

In calling, not for "better liaison", but for action that is within the capacity of university-based ecologists, the subcommittee was aware that the recommended institutional arrangement, a consortium of universities, is also beginning to lose some of its charm. At least academic administrators are doubtful that their own institutions can participate in many more of them, without detriment to their own fundamental objectives. As public-administration devices, consortia are undergoing rapid evolution; some are already quasi-independent "management corporations", and some may follow the COMSAT route to a "public-private corporation". The subcommittee recognized its own ignorance of administrative matters, and preferred to leave the corporate form of the national institute of ecology to development in more experienced hands. It suggested only that (as with UCAR) a fiscal officer of each founding university be included among the "founding fathers". In any case, the subcommittee was familiar with the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), recognized its near-identity of purpose with a national institute of ecology, and assumed that the members of OTS would be the most appropriate member universities, at least initially. The fact that the Central University of Costa Rica is a member seemed to point in the right direction; the participation of Canadian, West Indian, and Mexican Universities would add enormously to the strength of the proposed organization.

8. *Open questions.*—At this stage in the Study Committee's planning, a large number of questions, including the name and some aspects of the nature of the proposed national institute of ecology, are left open. The Committee can and does recommend, but all further decisions remain to be taken. These include the form and provisions of the articles of incorporation, the list of "founding fathers", the mode of financing, the choice of a Director, the size and nature of his staff, the scope and direction of the research program, the number and location of operating centers, and the degree to which the institute goes beyond its research functions to perform roles in ecological education and public affairs. Advice will be needed from many people, and not just from ecologists. Presumably, by the time suitable candidates for staff positions are identified, and a Director chosen, most policy decisions and many research plans will have been made. The Committee hopes for expeditious progress but does not urge haste.

9. *The role of the Society, and of the National Academy.*—The Ecological Society of America is a learned society, founded on a 17th century model, and its