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## The Only Earth We Have

The AAAS Board of Directors has established a major new committee for the purpose of conducting a continuing review and evaluation of the intrusions man makes into the environment on which life depends. With dams, pesticides, bulldozers, cities, chemical fertilizers, noise, defoliants, power plants, garbage dumps, automobiles, huge construction projects, and other means, man changes the land, the waters, and the atmosphere, in ways he intends and often in ways he does not intend. Widespread realization that man's intrusions into the environment sometimes bring results that are clearly undesirable and often bring results that are not understood has led a number of recent committees, commissions, and planning groups to consider the problems of improving the quality of life and of protecting our planet from the ravages of man. It is not because no other group is actively studying these problems that the Board of Directors decided to create the new AAAS committee, but rather because the problems are of such widespread importance that many groups must be involved.

Part of the background of the new committee is related by Luther Carter in the News and Comment section of this issue of *Science*. Because of the previously expressed concern of the AAAS Council over the unknown amount and persistence of ecological damage, in Vietnam and elsewhere, which results from the use of chemical and biological agents that alter the environment, the new committee is being asked to give initial attention to these questions.

The committee's responsibility is wider, however. It is expected to keep under review the various and changing technological developments and proposals that are likely to lead to substantial changes in the environment. The two most recent expressions of concern within the AAAS are two resolutions adopted by Council at the 1967 annual meeting. One called for restudy of the plan to dam the Red River of Kentucky. (A *New York Times* editorial entitled "Dam Nonsense in Kentucky" damned the project in its entirety.) The other deplored the loss of productive agricultural land, precious mineral and water resources, and sites of unusual scenic beauty or of rare geological, botanical, or zoological significance that are being gobbled up by highways, airstrips, suburbs, and industrial buildings when, with more careful planning, less valuable or less rare land could be employed for these purposes.

David Goddard, University of Pennsylvania, will be chairman of the new committee. Serving with him will be Barry Commoner, Washington University; Rene Dubos, Rockefeller University; Athelstan Spilhaus, Franklin Institute; and several other members still to be appointed. The members of the committee themselves, or the staff that will be appointed to aid the committee, may be given responsibility for some studies. In other instances the committee may establish special commissions to analyze particular problems, as the Association did in 1961 in appointing the Commission on Air Conservation.

One of the most significant aspects of the committee's prospective work is its commitment to consider environmental problems and population problems together. Some problems of population and some problems of environmental change can be studied in isolation, but the interactions are so intimate that many must be studied together. Man is the major creator of pollution, the only species likely to destroy the only Earth we have, or capable of planning its preservation. Problems of environmental change and problems of population size, growth, and quality will therefore be considered together.—DAEL WOLFE