

NRC IN THE POLLUTION BATTLE



As a result of the growing awareness that massive steps must be taken in the war against pollution, public and private bodies throughout the world are starting to organize broader programs in a better co-ordinated way to halt and reverse environmental deterioration.

Among these bodies is the National Research Council of Canada, which has announced a long-term program to assist Canadian authorities responsible for pollution abatement and control. This program will bring together the best scientific expertise in Canada to focus on the technical aspects of environmental quality problems.

The Council has established an Associate Committee on Scientific Criteria for Environmental Quality to collate and publish an integrated set of scientific requirements on which an evaluation of the quality of the environment can be based. These will be designed to assist authorities at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, which have the responsibility for the formulation and enforcement of environmental quality standards. This new Committee replaces NRC's Associate Committee on Water Pollution, formed in 1965, whose terms of reference were no longer adequate nor appropriate in view of major developments in the field of water resources under the responsibility of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

NRC will also establish a National Documentation

and Information Centre in its National Science Library to aid the work of the Committee. The Centre, which will assemble information from Canada and abroad on the scientific and technological aspects of pollution, will be established within the framework of NRC's general Scientific and Technical Information (STI) program.

The Committee will provide criteria based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence, which will make possible an evaluation and prescription of the quality of the environment with respect to pollutants and for all uses of the environment. Authorities will be able to use the criteria as guide-lines for establishing standards for safeguarding the environmental quality of a given region and the subsequent control, through legislation or otherwise, of the emission of environmental contaminants from all sources.

While there is at present only a modest effort on pollution and environmental research in NRC laboratories, the Council supports a considerable effort in universities through its grants program. Work is also being done in government laboratories, both federal and provincial, and in industrial laboratories.

"Since our interest is to provide a service," says Dr. W.G. Schneider, President of NRC, "the success of the program will depend both on the usefulness of the unified criteria to all who need them and on the support and co-operation of all organizations which could benefit from it as well as those who can contribute to it."