

scientists, not the least able, are the first to leave. "None of us really understands what's going on with all these numbers," David Stockman, Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, has said of the Reagan budget cuts. Unfortunately, within EPA, those eliminating the positions and programs are quite aware of what they are doing.

Acid rain

In the Reagan administration's campaign to reconstruct the American economy, the public demolition of the EPA has been paralleled by a quieter but no less effective undermining of long-standing federal environmental policies and regulations — especially regarding air pollution. On the implementation front, in on-going court cases and regulatory edicts, the consistent thrust of the Reagan appointees has been to weaken interpretations of the existing Clean Air Act. On the legislative front, during the 1981-2 congressional review and amendment of the act, their direction has been toward relaxing standards and removing mandatory requirements.

The existing act is a relatively tough statute — with respect to local ambient air quality. Reflecting the thinking of the early 1970s, however, it does not even address the now well-recognized problem of long-range transport. Efforts in Congress and among state governments for new provisions which seek to lessen acidic precipitation by requiring overall reductions of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions have been resisted by the administration and by the affected interests, especially coal and utility companies. A number of proposed congressional amendments to the Clean Air Act mandating substantial emission cuts have been opposed by administration spokespersons as premature at best; what is required before any new controls, they say, is a long-term (ten-year) program of scientific research. A recent proposal from within the National Governors' Association for a more modest emissions reduction of about five million (rather than up to ten million) tons, was shot down by economic concerns and by a highly organized and effective lobby of mid-west coal and utility interests conducted ultimately at the company president-governor level. The position of Ohio's Governor Rhodes, for example, is summed up in his statement that "You're talking about some fish in the northeast, while in Ohio we've got 22,000 unemployed coal miners."

The prospect for reduced U.S. emissions in the next few years thus appear extremely gloomy. And the prospects for any sort of meaningful bilateral agreement to lessen transboundary air pollution are, as a consequence, no better. To be sure, such an agreement was never a safe bet in the short run. Acid rain has only recently emerged in the U.S. from the dubious position of being rated, by a panel of media jurors, as one of the ten "best censored" stories in the country. The domestic political opposition to more stringent air pollution controls, even to ones with no significant price tag in terms of higher consumer power bills, was and is very strong. The impact of the Reagan presidency however has been to bolster substantially that opposition and probably to render negotiation of an effective bilateral accord impossible before the mid-1980s at the earliest. Official-level talks have been under way for almost a year. While not exactly stalled, they are, by the insistence

of the U.S. side, presently proceeding at a snail's pace and addressing only non-controversial items. As a recent editorial in a Cleveland newspaper put it, "The Reagan Administration has given Canadian officials an impression of sincere commitment to cooperating. . . . But in the case of acid rain, U.S. government rhetoric seems to conflict with action." Congressional sources agree. "The administration's real position," says an aide to a Republican Senator, "is to do nothing about acid rain."

President Carter's officials eventually became committed to addressing the acid rain problem, but were constrained by a shaky presidency and powerful economic interests. The new Reagan team is openly hostile to the idea of new emission controls and is in close alliance with those same interests.

Garrison Diversion

To paraphrase a famous American, recent reports of the death or "unmaking" of the Garrison Diversion project appear somewhat exaggerated. Garrison is a massive and staggeringly complex water diversion, supply, and irrigation project in North Dakota. Transferring water from the Missouri River across one continental divide (between Hudson Bay- and Gulf of Mexico-destined waters) to the dry central and eastern sections of that state is an idea which goes back to the 1800s. Actual plans were not developed until the late 1940s, however, and construction did not begin until 1968. While the primary purpose is irrigation (of about 100,000 hectares), benefits are also anticipated in terms of flood control, fish and wildlife management, and water for urban domestic and industrial use. Indeed, Garrison has been termed a "salvation" for the agriculturally-dominated, no-growth economy of North Dakota. Some proponents, with justification, consider the project minimal compensation for the 200,000 hectares of state land flooded when a dam was built on the Missouri in the 1950s which largely benefited downstream states. The project has nevertheless been heavily criticized on the grounds that it is environmentally unsound, uneconomic, energy inefficient, of benefit only to a few, and an illegitimate grab of water-use rights on the part of the State of North Dakota.

Canadian concerns focus on the environmental issues. These arise from the fact that most (over 80 percent) of the return flows from the system as originally planned would be through the Red and Souris Rivers into Manitoba. As expressed bilaterally first in 1969 and then repeatedly in the early and mid-1970s, the fear was that the Garrison's return flows would have a high saline and nutrient content. More recently the concerns, particularly of Manitoba's government, native people, and fishermen has been that the transfer of water from the Missouri system would introduce foreign biota into the Red and Souris Rivers and eventually into much of the Hudson Bay drainage system. The effect of new fish species and new fish diseases and parasites on the existing commercial and sports fishery of Lake Winnipeg, for example, could be irreversible and devastating in the long-term. Some critics have also warned of possible dangers to human health from deterioration of Manitoba community domestic water supplies.

Completion of the Garrison project appeared to have been blocked in the late 1970s by a combination of fac-