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Air Conservation

The AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare has given the following charge to its newly appointed Air Conservation Commission (see p. 27):

"Man's existence has always depended upon the delicate equilibrium of the constituents of the atmosphere. At the present pace of technological change, and because of the growing magnitude of industrial and other operations, widespread alterations in these constituents are occurring. We now possess the capacity to determine whether the atmosphere shall be used in such a way as to preserve its ability to sustain life, or whether man's atmospheric environment shall continue to deteriorate, to the detriment of his health and his way of life. The future of mankind depends upon the wisdom with which we conserve our atmospheric resources.

"The present state of knowledge about atmospheric pollution and its control provides a basis for predicting consequences for our air resources of certain patterns of human activity, such as transportation systems, industrial operations, energy production, and weapons testing. Given this knowledge, policy decisions on matters like land utilization, fuel usage, and urban organization become imperative in conserving our air resources. A sound public policy, suitably implemented, can protect health and economic values, and can encourage technological progress.

"The American Association for the Advancement of Science's Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare has developed recommendations concerning the role of the scientific community and its members in issues of public policy involving scientific considerations. Among other things, it concluded that the scientific community should 'provide for the public and its social and political agencies, objective statements of the facts and of the consequences of alternative policies that are required for informed decisions on the relative merits of proposed courses of action.'

"In order to encourage the application of scientific objectivity and the fund of scientific information to the problems associated with air conservation, the resources of the scientific community may be applied to these problems in several ways: (i) to assemble and transmit facts relevant to the formulation of public policy decisions; (ii) to predict from these facts the consequences of alternative public policies; (iii) to assess the assumptions and limits of error underlying these facts and predictions; (iv) to determine which additional facts are needed to arrive at reliable predictions; (v) to periodically evaluate the consequences of public policies in light of available facts.

"The American Association for the Advancement of Science Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare hereby convenes an Air Conservation Commission to marshal the resources of the scientific community in the manner mentioned above. This Commission is charged with responsibility to define the issues and the consequences which may be anticipated from these alternatives, so far as available facts permit. The Commission's findings shall be reported through appropriate channels of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to the scientific community at large."—*AAAS Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare*