NEWS IN BRIEF

• **CBW**: The Florida White House announced on 14 February that President Nixon has banned production and use of toxins for germ warfare purposes. The President's decision ends a controversy over whether toxins should be included in his earlier ban on biological weapons. Toxins are chemicals that are produced by biological organisms and they thus fall somewhere between chemical and biological weapons. The Administration has estimated that a chemical means for producing toxins could be developed within 5 years, but Nixon decided to ban all toxins regardless of their origin. Nixon's order requires the destruction of all toxin stocks except those needed for "defensive research," such as research on immunization techniques. A high administration official said the Pine Bluff, Arkansas, biological warfare center will no longer be required for classified work and might possibly be used for civilian health research.

• **HERBICIDE EFFECTS ASSESSMENT COMMISSION DIRECTOR**: Arthur J. Westing, associate professor of botany and chairman of the biology department at Windham College in Vermont, has been appointed director of the AAAS Herbicide Effects Assessment Commission. Matthew S. Meselson, a Harvard biologist named by AAAS to plan a study of the effects of defoliants and herbicides used in South Vietnam, appointed Westing to direct the project. Westing will coordinate the work of several scientific specialists in order to prepare a detailed plan to investigate the long-term effects of these chemicals on the ecology and on human welfare in Vietnam.

• **POLLUTION AT FEDERAL FACILITIES**: Declaring that the federal government has become one of the nation's worst polluters, President Nixon has issued an Executive Order requiring federal facilities to conform with air and water quality standards established under federal law. The order establishes a $359-million program for achieving this objective, prohibits the transfer of these funds to other programs, requires that new facilities be pollution-free, and gives responsibility for enforcement of the order to the secretaries of Interior and Health, Education, and Welfare.

• **DADDARIO SEEKS GOVERNORSHIP**: Representative Emilio Daddario (D–Conn.), who is considered one of the strongest congressional supporters of science, has announced his candidacy for the governorship of Connecticut after 12 years in Congress. Daddario is a member of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, and chairman of its Subcommitee on Science, Research, and Development, which oversees the budget of the National Science Foundation.

• **FLORIDA JETPORT**: An agreement between state, local, and federal officials seems to have ruled out completion of a jetport near the Everglades National Park. An alternative site in southern Florida will be sought; the partially finished facilities at the original site will be used for training purposes, and only until another site can be found. Interior Secretary Walter Hickel and Transportation Secretary John Volpe, in making the announcement, cited as the major motivation for the agreement a concern for the ecological stability of the area. Subsequently, two Floridans have filed suit to stop use of the training airstrip, contending that even limited use of the facilities will injure the Everglades.

• **JAPANESE SATELLITE**: Japan has become the fourth nation in the world —after Russia, the United States and France—to orbit its own satellite with its own rocket. On 11 February, following a series of frustrating failures, Tokyo University scientists successfully launched a 51-pound, 18-inch-wide scientific satellite using a solid-fuel rocket without sophisticated guidance mechanisms. The satellite stopped transmitting a few hours after launch, apparently because of battery failure.

• **U.N. ENVIRONMENT CONGRESS**: Stockholm has been chosen as the site of the U.N. Environment Congress in June 1972. The conference was conceived as a means to stimulate and to provide guidelines for action by national governments and international organizations to solve environmental problems. United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, government delegations, scientists, educators, writers, and the press are among those expected to attend the 2-week conference.

by the U.S. Steel Company. Originally, HLP had planned to draw up to nearly 1 billion gallons of cooling water a day directly from the Houston Ship Channel, running this highly polluted water through the plant and then discharging it into the relatively clean waters of Trinity Bay.

Conservation groups were outraged, and HLP, fearing that the Corps of Engineers might withhold the permit required, modified the plan by routing the cooling water intake system away from the Ship Channel. Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of the Interior, in a report prepared in 1968 by its southwest regional office, has expressed concern, that, by comparison with the waters of Trinity Bay, the cooling water discharged from the plant will be more polluted, of higher salinity, and from 7° to 12°F warmer. The effect on marine life will be bad and perhaps disastrous, the report indicates. Although HLP says these fears are groundless, the test will come when the new plant begins operating.

(HLP hopes to build additional generating units at the Cedar Bayou site and, in anticipation of possible objections from regulatory agencies, it is now seeking means to avoid thermal pollution altogether. There are but two possible solutions: a closed, recycling cooling system with evaporative cooling towers or a large cooling pond through which water from the plant would be circulated before its discharge into Trinity Bay.)

Even the changes to the bay environment which HLP will cause could be dwarfed by those that might follow construction of a hurricane levee the Corps of Engineers proposes to build at or near the entrance to Galveston Bay. This latter project, which is still in the conceptual stage, could alter the entire natural regime of the bay and concentrate pollutants in the bay's middle and upper reaches, although the Army engineers are making model studies in order to design a project that would not have such effects.

The channel dredging, shelldredging, water diversions, flooding of marshes, pollution—these all represent large-scale and often heedless or inadvertent modification of the Galveston Bay environment. While rapid population and economic growth have made environmental change inevitable, hurtful effects on the bay could have been mitigated and in some cases avoided were it not for the following: first, too little has been known about the bay, and those