

Letters

Remarkable Crime Bill

One can gain an idea of the hysteria into which the Administration is successfully driving the Congress from the appallingly loose language of portions of the recently enacted Organized Crime Control Bill. The portions of the bill that I have in mind are those added by the Administration at the last moment, after all hearings had been completed. This extraordinary procedure brought irritated comments from Emanuel Celler, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, directed not against the content of the addenda, but only against this assault on his committee's prerogatives. The additions to the bill were incorporated essentially without change.

Section 844 (f) of the bill adds nothing to existing legislation or executive orders and is remarkable only by including in a list of property owned or leased in whole or in part by the federal government "any institution or organization receiving federal financial assistance." That, of course, brings under federal jurisdiction almost every institution of higher education in the country. The matter specifically involved is malicious damage or destruction, real or attempted, of personal or real property "by means of an explosive."

Section (g) reads "Whoever possesses an explosive in any building in whole or in part owned, possessed or used by, or leased to, the United States or any department or agency thereof, except with the written consent of the agency, department, or other person responsible for the management of such building shall be imprisoned for not more than one year, or fined not more than \$1,000, or both."

Section (j) defines "explosive." In addition to various things commonly recognized as explosives, it includes "any chemical compound, mechanical mixture, or device that contains any oxidizing and combustible units, or other ingredients, in such proportions, quantities, or packing that ignition by fire, by friction, by concussion, by percussion, or by detonation of the compound, mixture, or device or any part thereof may cause an explosion." Like

a package of matches. Like illuminating gas. Like the gasoline in your car. Like rubbing alcohol. Like most of the solvents in any research laboratory, or teaching laboratory in chemistry, biology, biochemistry, physics, engineering—what have you?

This is what President Nixon plans to hire 1000 new FBI agents to enforce.

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Eutrophication—Key Elements

Contrary to the assertion in Abelson's editorial "Excessive emotion about detergents" (11 Sept., p. 1033), the attack on phosphates in detergents by the House Subcommittee on Conservation and Natural Resources, of which I am chairman, is not based on the "hypothesis that phosphates are the crucial nutrient that determines the magnitude of algal blooms." We think a search for the "crucial nutrient" in excessive algal growth will never be successful. Algae require at least 15 elements, in addition to water, to sustain their growth. The element that at a given time is in shortest supply relative to the algae's need for it limits the growth of the algae. But, to control algal growth by nutrient removal, it is not necessary to know what this limiting element is. If the available supply of any nutrient element is choked off to a low enough point, that element will become the limiting one.

The report prepared by my subcommittee urges control of algae by phosphorus deprivation because "our technology is strongest in the area of removing phosphorus" (1, p. 7). It does not make the suggestion because phosphorus is more, or less, a "crucial" element than carbon in the nutrition of algae. None of the material we have seen suggests that we have the capability of depriving algae of their carbon supplies, especially their supplies of carbon dioxide in the air.

We have never stated that elimination of phosphates from detergents

would "solve" the eutrophication problem. We also urge better sewage treatment and control of industrial and agricultural wastes (1, p. 44). But it stands to reason that with detergents contributing between 28.5 and 70 percent of the phosphorus input to many of America's waters, eliminating phosphates from detergents would be a giant step toward retarding eutrophication (1, p. 12).

Do you really know that "In most drainage basins of the country no serious problems arise from detergents?" We had time to investigate only two basins, the Great Lakes and the Potomac, in our study which extended over several months. We found serious eutrophication problems in both, and we found that detergents were deeply involved. Vollenweider (2, p. 17) calls the problem of eutrophication worldwide. Excessive emotion about detergents appears in the propaganda of the soap and phosphate lobbies, not in our report.

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References

1. *Phosphates in Detergents and the Eutrophication of America's Waters*, House Committee on Government Operations, House Rept. 91-1004, 14 Apr. 1970 (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.).
2. R. A. Vollenweider, "Scientific Fundamentals of the Eutrophication of Lakes and Flowing Waters, with Particular Reference to Nitrogen and Phosphorus as Factors in Eutrophication," OECD Report DAS/CSI/68.27 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Directorate for Scientific Affairs, Paris, 1968).

... In the control of artificial eutrophication the key element is that which can be limited so as to cause a satisfactory decrease in the abundance of nuisance-producing algae. In many places phosphorus can be so limited with beneficial effects, but not carbon.

Much of the disagreement is only apparent, generated by the fact that the Carbon People insist on talking about the general mechanism of control of seasonal changes in abundance of phytoplankton, while the Phosphate People want to talk about what we can do to improve artificially eutrophicated lakes. Much of the controversy is not about data or even their interpretation, but results simply from the fact that people are talking about rather different things. . . .

As readers of *Science* know, Lake Washington is the site of an experiment in this field (1). Diversion of treated sewage was followed by a much greater