

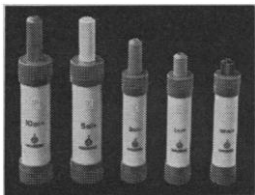
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Clear-cutting

Robert Gillette reports in "A modest environmental message" (News and Comment, 11 Feb., p. 609) that conservationists were critical of President Nixon's hesitation to impose restrictions on "the frequently destructive practice of clear-cutting in the national forests."

Few foresters would deny that clear-cutting is misapplied or is a poor choice among alternative timber-harvesting methods under certain circumstances. Aesthetic considerations, recreational use, soil stability, forest-cover type, and objectives of management, among other things, may affect the choice of a harvesting method. About the nonquantitative expression "frequently destructive," one may ask, Destructive of what? Again, circumstances determine whether something of value is destroyed or whether a renewable resource is converted to human use.

Considering the broad spectrum of our national forests, one can question whether nationwide restrictions on clear-cutting should attract the support of scientists and professionals, who are committed to analysis and the making of distinctions. Clear-cutting is, in the majority of our commercially important timber types, the method of harvesting and regeneration that makes the least demands on other valuable resources, such as energy and labor, and on road mileage, transportation, and supervision. One of the duties of foresters is to decide, after due consideration of the many values and costs involved, how or whether to harvest timber. They ask no more—nor less—respect for their competence and integrity than does a physician who would rightly resist a federally imposed ban on appendectomies.

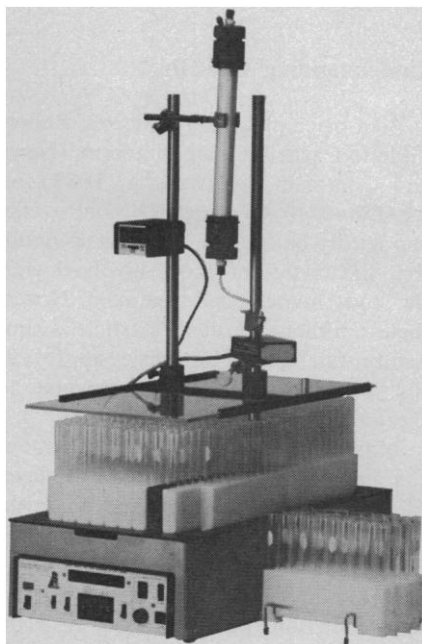
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Newsgathering

We take strong exception to the tone and much of the substance of the report on the National Cancer Act by Barbara J. Culliton (News and Comment, 28 Apr., p. 386). This is but the latest of a series of articles which attribute attitudes, opinions, and even direct quotations to informants who remain

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mercifully anonymous and therefore beyond evaluation and scrutiny. This irresponsible approach to newsgathering is bad enough when it focuses on public issues and policies. It is inexcusable when it deals with the reputation and personal characteristics of individuals.

In particular, we protest the cavalier treatment accorded to Carl Baker [retiring director of the National Cancer Institute] and the less extensive but equally undocumented tidbits about other protagonists of the current cancer effort. We urge the editor to adhere in *Science's* news section to the criteria of scientific accuracy and documentation that are required in the remainder of its pages and to leave the gossip columns to those organs which devote their undivided attention to yellow journalism.

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