

ending urban sprawl, and making residential development more compact and energy-efficient.

Sweeping executive reorganization proposals usually have hard going. Some of the agencies that are to be affected, together with their various constituencies and congressional allies, will always oppose the proposed changes either overtly or covertly, taking good advantage of the massive inertia of the status quo. So, predictably,

the proposal for the new department got nowhere. The land use bill was sympathetically received in Congress at that time, but a few more years would pass before both the House and the Senate would be ready to act on such legislation.

Meanwhile, the energy issue was in the air, posing the question as to the place the Department of the Interior and its secretary would have in the development and administration of energy

policy. Morton, to his credit, was seeing to it that Interior—which already contained several energy units, such as the Bureau of Mines, the Office of Coal Research, the Office of Oil and Gas, and the Oil Import Administration—was gearing up to play a broader role in the energy field. Under him, the department was adding three new energy offices, one for conservation, another for the collection and analysis of energy data, and a third for a program of voluntary

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## Briefing

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### Focus on Food

Food Day is coming on 17 April. Modeled on the lines of Earth Day, originally celebrated in April 1970, Food Day will mark an assortment of activities around the nation to raise public awareness about nutrition, food prices, and world hunger problems.

The chief mover behind Food Day is Michael Jacobson, a scientist-activist and author of several consumer-oriented food books who is associated with the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) in Washington. Jacobson says dozens of educational "food fairs" will be held in parks, and teach-ins will be conducted at high schools and colleges. There will be rallies, fastings, garden plantings, and local television and radio spots to celebrate the day. The Public Broadcasting System has put together a 2-hour special, "The Last American Supper," to be aired on Food Day. And CSPI has assembled an "official Food Day anthology" called *Food for People Not for Profit*.

Jacobson says that despite the political apathy some people believe has settled over the land, the response from community groups and local governments to the Food Day idea has been surprisingly enthusiastic. He theorizes that people are looking for a new cause now that other issues, such as the anti-war and women's movements, have either disappeared or entered a more stable phase.

Organizers of Food Day hope the occasion will spur grass-roots efforts by people to exercise more control over their food supply—by establishment of food cooperatives, for example—and will catalyze the formation of new consumer groups. Food Day will be a one-

shot deal because, as Jacobson observes, these things never happen the same way twice. One need only trace the evolution of Earth Day, which some hoped to make an annual event. This year President Ford proclaimed 21 March as Earth Day 1975, and hardly anyone noticed.—C.H.

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### Reserve Mining (Cont.)

On 31 March the Supreme Court refused, for the third time, to intervene in a long-simmering case involving the efforts of the U.S. government, three states, and several environmental groups to stop Reserve Mining Company of Minnesota from dumping 67,000 tons of asbestos-like tailings daily into Lake Superior (*Science*, 4 October 1974).

The court action followed a 21 March letter sent by Russell Train, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, to the Justice Department, in which he recommended that the government settle for an appeals court ruling rather than pursue the matter to the Supreme Court. The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled a week earlier that Reserve's discharges violate air and water pollution laws and that they "give rise to a potential threat to public health." The circuit court ordered Reserve to take immediate action to remedy the air situation, but did not set a firm timetable for cessation of water dumping (the plaintiffs sought a 2-year deadline), since it claimed that no harm to public health had yet been proven.

An estimated \$4 million has been spent by the federal government alone in 6 years of litigation with Reserve Mining. Last year a district court judge ordered the company to cease opera-

tions immediately, but a three-judge panel of the appeals court stayed the order pending a full hearing.

EPA chose to regard the subsequent ruling as sufficient to stimulate stepped-up abatement efforts, and Train has ordered the formation of a multidisciplinary task force to monitor Reserve's cleanup programs.

The private plaintiffs in the case, however, feel the appeals court decision is too vague. Philip Mause, a lawyer with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), says a decision remains to be made on whether to petition the Supreme Court for certiorari. (The 31 March action was a denial of a move to vacate last year's stay order.) Meanwhile, EDF is seeking to close what it calls a loophole in the appeals court decision which could allow Reserve to continue dumping tailings into the lake indefinitely if the company and the state of Minnesota can't agree on a suitable land disposal site. The plaintiffs are also monitoring health studies on asbestos in an effort to determine whether ingestion of the fibers in drinking water (as opposed to inhalation, which is known to be carcinogenic) poses a health threat.

Reserve Mining's operations have generated immense public concern in surrounding communities. The key issue has been whether the potential threat to health is great enough to justify termination of operations. The environmentalist viewpoint has been that, since a potential health threat has been clearly established, the burden of proof that dumping activities are not hazardous should rest with the company. But this argument is difficult to sell at a time when layoffs of workers resulting from closedown of the plant would be disastrous for the local economy.—C.H.