

SIPI Takes Over as Publisher of *Environment* Magazine

The Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI), which was formed just 10 years ago to build on the work of existing local groups in the scientific information movement, has taken over as publisher of *Environment* magazine. The change in management is one move in an effort to give SIPI a broader and more solid base as a national organization.

Environment has been published by the St. Louis Committee for Environmental Information (CEI), one of the original and most active of the local groups formed to provide reliable scientific information to the public on important issues. *Environment* has actually been an official publication of SIPI since 1964, but CEI in St. Louis has carried the editorial and financial responsibilities of the magazine. The plan is for SIPI to expand as a membership organization with a subscription to *Environment* included as an inducement to join.

Over the past decade SIPI has served as an information clearinghouse for its local affiliates, performed fund-raising functions, and undertaken projects of its own. Operating support for SIPI has come primarily from private foundations and, to a lesser extent, from individual contributors. In the beginning, SIPI membership was limited to scientists. The current president is Margaret Mead, and chairman of the board is Barry Commoner, both original members of SIPI. About 2 years ago, SIPI created two categories of membership—SIPI fellows, a category limited to scientists who are willing to work actively on SIPI projects; and members who may be laymen and who lend financial support but are not necessarily involved in the work of SIPI. Laymen were also elected to the SIPI board for the first time about 2 years ago.

There are now 90 fellows, and plans call for their number to be increased and also for the ranks of members to be greatly expanded. SIPI would then resemble more closely other nonprofit "membership corporations" which derive a major portion of their budgets from membership income. A tenth-anniversary meeting of SIPI is scheduled for 9 to 13 March at Berkeley, and the meeting will be devoted in part to charting new directions for an expanded SIPI.

Some original members of SIPI feel that the tenth-anniversary meeting marks a critical juncture, just as the first meeting did in 1963. The scientific information movement got rolling in the late 1950's in response to the concern of scientists over the threat of nuclear weapons and, particularly, the danger of fallout from nuclear testing. Local scientific information groups were responsible to a major extent for making the public aware of the rise in radiation levels due to atmospheric testing. At the time of the 1963 meeting at which SIPI was founded, there was a growing assumption among many of the scientists attending that the partial test ban treaty would sharply diminish fallout dangers; there was some suggestion that the local groups had completed their task. Other members of the original group, however, anticipated the rise of a broader concern about environmental matters. They prevailed, and the focus of concern both of SIPI and the local groups steadily widened.

Environment magazine reflected this evolution. Be-

gun in mimeographed format by Commoner and his colleagues at Washington University in 1958, it was originally called *Nuclear Information* and concentrated, as the name implies, on the health implications of radiation.

The transition to the treatment of broader environmental issues came gradually, but there were intimations of it in the early 1960's. Commoner recalls the effect on his own thinking of an issue of *Nuclear Information* in 1961 which dealt with the effects of fallout on the fragile ecology of Alaska. One article traced fallout through the food chain from lichens to caribou to people. "The Alaska thing got us into ecology," says Commoner, "we realized we were dealing with an ecosystem."

After the 1963 meeting and the creation of SIPI, the title of *Nuclear Information* was changed to *Scientist and Citizen*, and the articles began to deal with broader public policy issues involving science.

As the 1960's proceeded, the environmental movement gained considerable momentum. *Scientist and Citizen* was regarded as useful source material, but circulation in the middle 1960's ranged from between 2000 to 4000. A decision was made to strengthen the magazine and launch a drive to expand circulation. Sheldon Novick was made editor, and other staff members were added. The first issue of 1969 carried the new name *Environment*.

Foundation funds were obtained for the circulation-building effort, and in the following 4 years circulation rose to 26,000. *Environment* does not carry advertising, and it has continued to operate at a deficit, made up largely through contributions from individuals.

There are at present no plans to shift the magazine's headquarters from St. Louis. Other new projects of SIPI will apparently be concentrated in New York. The newest project is a news service, which, for the past 6 months, has been supplying news on environmental matters, on a trial basis, to newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. Environment News Service, launched on a foundation grant, is now undergoing evaluation; the intention is to operate it as a self-supporting activity.

SIPI membership costs \$25 a year. In addition to a subscription to *Environment*, a member will receive the monthly SIPI newsletter and discounts on other SIPI publications and services.

For *Environment*, the advantages of the shift to SIPI management are seen not simply as the acquisition of a national financial base. Novick points out that *Environment* has been expanding coverage and "putting environmental questions in a broader political context. This requires a broader scientific base." The magazine should be strengthened by its access to the expertise of those associated with SIPI.

For SIPI, the adoption process was logical. *Environment* was officially a publication of SIPI, but it operated virtually independently; the feeling was growing within SIPI that the organization needed a national publication that was really its own. The transfer also simplifies things financially; both *Environment* and SIPI have relied on funds from foundations, and the relationship between SIPI and the magazine tended to confuse foundation officials.—JOHN WALSH