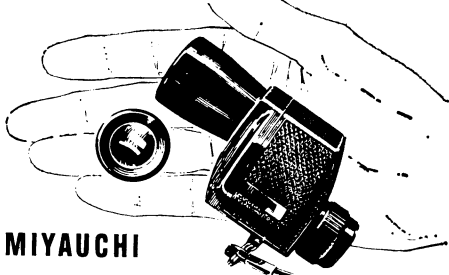


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WATER FOR PEACE



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World interest ends centuries of unconcern.

by John Ludwigson

Mankind has hardly improved its management of the water resources on the earth since the days when Roman engineers perfected the aqueduct.

Yet, today there are three billion people sharing the same water resources the Romans and other ancients enjoyed. Every day another 200,000 thirsty mouths join the throng.

And, as the technological revolution spreads around the world, the amount of water needed to sustain each man, woman and child rises inexorably. Water that is already being reused many times as it flows in the world's rivers will have to be reused and recycled even more.

But the technology of water has not kept pace at all with the technology that depends on it.

Even in the water-rich areas of the technologically-advanced United States, reservoirs have repeatedly run dry. In less fortunate areas of the world, many people exist on a few quarts a day.

Obviously, water supply is a major world problem, ranking with population pressure and food supply. As a beginning attack on this problem, the United States has mounted the Water

for Peace program.

This week, delegates from some 80 nations are in Washington, D.C., for an International Conference on Water for Peace where they will discuss both the extent of the problem and the solutions offered by present-day technology.

Arriving with the national delegates are representatives of 12 international organizations and eight agencies of the United Nations. Nine governments and 48 industrial firms are exhibiting in the Water for Peace Exposition accompanying the conference.


Interior Secretary Stewart Udall is presiding officer of the conference.

It is not, basically, a technical conference, according to its Secretary General, Richard C. Hagan, but an opportunity for government ministers and engineers from all over the world to get together to exchange experiences in dealing with their respective water problems.

"It's true nature is that of a symposium," he explains. "When you consider all the water problems included in such a broad, universal discourse, you can do little more than explore, feel out and exchange views."

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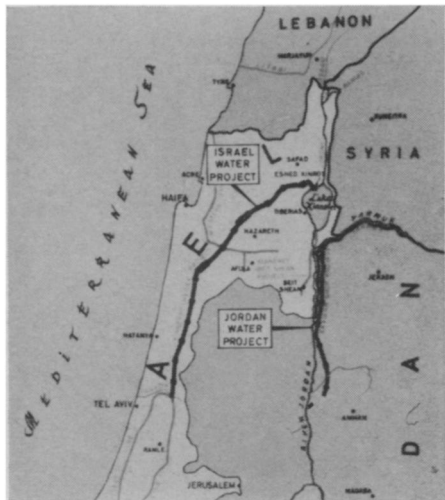
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WFF'N PROOF



Detailed discussion of specific problems, he feels, may come later, based on contacts made at the conference. "I think within the framework of existing institutions we may find . . . (eventually) an effort towards establish-

Dry nations such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, where desert areas abut the sea coast, for example, are already building desalination plants with U.S. design help, of the kind for which other nations may well be negotiating during



State of Israel

Pipelines to make desert bloom.

ment of regional water centers," he says.

Underlying any such program is the basic fact that, while many people can barely get enough to drink, there is really no shortage of water. The problem lies entirely in its distribution.

Not counting the oceans and polar ice caps, there are about 3.6 trillion acre-feet of water in the world. Something like 80 billion acre-feet falls on the continents annually as rain or snow.

But this is not evenly spread around. While 200 inches of rain wet the western Olympic peninsula in the U.S. each year, perhaps two inches or less fall in areas such as Niger and Mauritania in the Sahara Desert.

And even where there is plenty of water, clean and convenient supplies for household use may not exist. A survey of 60 developing nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America disclosed that 90 percent of their people depend on inadequate or unsafe water supplies, even in major cities.

For many of these areas, the problem is largely economic and educational. Once the local problem is understood, fairly standard water systems engineering can easily insure a good supply. Paying for it is another matter, which some delegates to the conference may want to discuss with World Bank representatives who will be present.

Along with exploration of the experience of cities like Asuncion, Paraguay, where one water distribution problem was solved with the installation of self-closing water valves, delegates will also be examining more grandiose solutions like desalination and weather modification.



State of Israel

Israeli water tunnel in Gallilee.

the conference.

Potentially of even greater value than desalination are operational weather modification systems.

Most weather modification studies so



State of Israel

Testing a solar still at Beersheba.

far have been carried out in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. (SN: 5/6).

The Soviet Union, though invited, declined to attend the conference.

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