

thing without regard to the effects it will have."

The plan regards the states as a pivotal element in any plan to improve the management of coastal resources. But they are hampered by lack of funds, jurisdictional difficulties and a dearth of information on coastal ecology. The program of matching Federal grants would initially aid the development by the states of the needed planning and regulatory mechanisms and then assist in operating the systems that are evolved. □

CBW

Choice in the making

For some months, a reevaluation of the United States' chemical and biological weapons policy has been under way. The review was brought to public attention by criticism from Rep. Richard D. McCarthy (D-N.Y.) and revealed in a subsequent letter to him from President Nixon (SN: 6/28, p. 610).

At stake is whether or not the United States should ratify the 1925 Geneva Protocol outlawing the use of lethal chemical and biological weapons. Although the United States signed the treaty, the Senate refused to ratify it.

The President has asked Government agencies such as the Defense and State Departments for their views on CB weapons. Most of their replies have been sent to the National Security Council, which last month was to have submitted policy choices to Mr. Nixon. The agencies' answers will determine the alternatives the council will suggest to Mr. Nixon. The council's recommendations are expected shortly, perhaps within a month.

One of the critical issues being considered is whether the Geneva treaty should apply to the use of incapacitating agents, such as tear gas. Neither the Protocol or prior international gas warfare resolutions spelled out clearly enough whether they were meant to include such nonlethal agents.

The problem for Mr. Nixon is that if he rejects the Geneva agreement, he will incite criticism of his effort to end the Vietnam War and of the seriousness of his intention to ban a weapon generally regarded as repugnant. Even if he accepts the treaty with a reservation excluding incapacitating agents, he will still be criticized by people here and abroad, especially neutral nations, who fear that their use could lead to full-scale chemical and biological warfare.

Noting, for example, that tear gas has been used in Vietnam to drive the enemy out into the arms of B-52 bombers, Dr. Matthew Meselson, CBW authority at Harvard University, feels that, "this makes the use of tear gas

almost equivalent to the use of poison gas and therefore likely to stimulate escalation and proliferation of gas warfare."

Dr. Meselson favors the swift ratification of the Geneva Protocol, now signed by 65 nations, without reservations, a move that would satisfy some but would bring down the wrath of those who feel that it would weaken the U.S. military posture.

Essentially, Mr. Nixon's choices narrow down to accepting the Protocol without reservation, which would mean outlawing the use of lethal and non-lethal CBW agents, or accepting the Protocol with the reservation that such nonlethal agents can be used, or refusing to accept the treaty at all.

The National Academy of Sciences addressed itself to the ratification question last week at its fall meeting at Dartmouth College. From the meeting it appears clear that there is preference among NAS members for ratification. But even if the use of CBW agents were banned, the treaty would not necessarily mean the U.S. would stop work on them.

Han Swyter, an economist formerly with the Defense Department, for example, favors ratification but says that U.S. CBW policy should depend on the purpose it serves. This would limit variety in the arsenal.

Said Swyter, "The objectives should be principally non-proliferation and deterrence." He concludes, "We need only lethal chemicals without any need for any biological weapons or for incapacitating chemicals to meet these objectives." □

NEWS BRIEFS

Water treatment; homosexuals

Three treatment steps are considered necessary to purify sewage completely: sedimentation (primary), biological treatment (secondary) and chemical treatment (tertiary). In an effort to get communities to upgrade the quality of their treated water, the Interior Department announced this week that it would deny all Federal funds for the construction of purely primary treatment plants. □

Two years ago a report of the British Wolfenden Commission resulted in legalizing homosexual acts between consenting adults in Great Britain. Now a task force appointed by the National Institute of Mental Health wants a similar law for the United States.

"The opprobrium that our society has attached to homosexual behavior," said the 14-member task force this week, "has done more social harm than good." □

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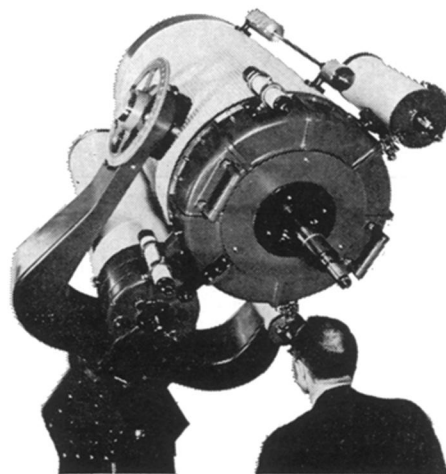
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