

## Environment message

President Nixon's environmental message last week was short on wholly new proposals. For instance, his proposed tax on sulfur oxide emissions had been proposed before.

An interesting and perhaps significant new initiative, however, was his announcement that he had instructed the Department of Housing and Urban Development to change insulation requirements for Federally-insured housing. The new standards would reduce heat losses one-third from earlier maximum permissible levels for single-unit dwellings, and 40 percent for apartments. The cost of the additional insulation can be paid for in a year in the case of the single-family dwellings, the President said—through savings in energy. Some scientists say that such simple expedients could go a long way toward solving the energy crisis.

Wildlife enthusiasts are pleased with the President's announcement that the Fish and Wildlife Service will halt most programs for poisoning of predators on public lands. □

## Energy policy

In a report last week, Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton called for a long-range energy policy. The policy could, he said, be best administered by the earlier proposed new Department of Natural Resources.

In some ways the new report closely resembles an earlier report by the National Petroleum Council. Both assume a continuation of the last 25-years' pattern of exponential growth in energy demand and use in the United States. That assumption has been increasingly criticized by many environmentalists and scientists who see ultimate disaster in exponential energy use growth. They call instead for rigorous conservation of energy resources.

The new report also notes that domestic reserves of gas and oil have declined in recent years, "reflecting insufficient incentive . . . in exploration and development" of new reserves. But critics point out incentives to the oil industry in general are already provided by large Federal subsidies. □

## Luna 20

The Soviet Union announced Feb. 14 the launch of Luna 20. The announcement was couched in terminology similar to that used for Luna 16—an unmanned landing craft that returned samples of Mare Fecunditatis to earth. Western space officials speculate that if the craft were launched from earth orbit (as one report said) the Soviets may be trying to get to an area of the moon west of their last site. □

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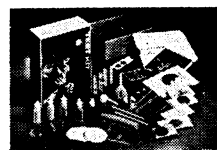
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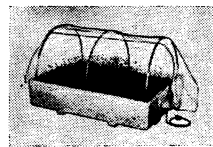
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