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# Rainmaking's Plug Nearly Pulled

**M**ANY Oklahomans have been fighting the current drouth for five years. When the weather was dry, they made some progress, but last year's copious rains almost wrecked weather modification projects launched in 1971-72.

It was like that hillbilly who couldn't repair his roof when it was raining and when it wasn't raining. It didn't leak. The time to prepare for drouth is when it's raining!

Weather modification is a proven fact. More than 25 years ago, it was clearly established by three reputable scientists that dry ice dropped from an airplane into cumulus clouds would stimulate precipitation, or if it was raining, increase rainfall.

Since then, other materials have been found to be effective nucleating agents. In addition to costly aircraft, economical ground-based generators can be used to disperse rain-making particles into the atmosphere. Silver iodide is one of the best.

The government has spent millions of dollars on weather modification research. Results have been pitiful, mainly because of lack of objectives and competent direction toward solving one of the nation's most urgent problems, intermittent drouth.

Administrators have taken the attitude that weather modification to increase rainfall should not be used until they are ready to run it. "Don't do anything practical until we have tried out all of our theories and are absolutely sure we know what we are doing about weather modification," seems to be a reasonable summary of attitudes of those who want

to make their research projects last through their careers. University and private research agencies carefully avoid saying or doing anything that might endanger their federal contracts.

Oklahoma probably is in as favorable position as any state for launching a wide area program to fight drouth by seeding clouds. But it will require more public interest and better financing than we now have.

Present projects are financed from municipal funds at Lawton, from a water development fund at Stillwater, and from private contributions of farmers, ranchers and business men in nearly a dozen counties. All projects are with private operators.

State law authorizes municipalities, counties or designated districts to vote assessments to finance weather modification although none has done so. Legislation pending in

Congress would authorize the Department of Agriculture to provide matching funds for weather modification and provides for local control of projects.

In addition to money, we need to think more about wide area, multi-state weather modification. Records show that drouth often begins in arid regions to the south and west, then spreads over large areas. This is apparently the present pattern.

We are on the verge of a big break through in weather modification, but we have to break the barricade of bureaucracy before we can crack the clouds. It may be too late already to save our summer crops, but maybe we could get something done before wheat planting time, if we get busy now.

Like inflation, drouth is hard to stop once it gets going, and Washington doesn't have a simple solution for either.