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## Weather Modification Use Needed To Ease Drouth, Gain Knowledge

**G**OVERNMENT scientists testifying at a hearing on proposed weather modification legislation in Washington last week argued that since we do not know all about it, we shouldn't use knowledge we have to prevent, alleviate or stop drouth.

This is an unreasonable attitude, in view of the beginnings and progress of other scientific developments throughout history.

The human race would have starved to death if mankind had waited for modern air-conditioned, self-propelled combines to begin harvesting grain mechanically. Instead, they used the grain cradle and gleaned by hand to start growing bigger crops.

Early man wanted to fly like the birds and tried many ideas that didn't work. We still can't fly like birds, but today's jets are somewhat advanced from the Wright brothers' crude machine.

The magic of television didn't begin with living room pictures of man walking on the moon. It got a start when men succeeded in speaking to one another by "wireless telephones."

The list of discoveries that were used in primitive stages and improved during use might be extended indefinitely.

A spokesman for the National Science Foundation said that the effort to increase rainfall by cloud seeding is "less than well advanced in the state of the art at this point in time."

Nobody claims that it is perfect, but there are thousands of people, including many scientists, who have observed cause-and-effects of artificial nucleating materials projected into clouds, resulting in precipitation or increasing rainfall.

Oklahomans attending the hearing challenged the scientists, and we wonder whether congressmen will do likewise.

Beneficial results have been obtained in more than a dozen cloud seeding districts in this state in a series of operations over the past five years. They are not presently active because funds are not available and controversy among scientists keeps people confused over which to believe.

Farmers and ranchers who are most concerned about getting rain are not thinking in terms of global weather modification, as some scientists are. One scientist said that since we don't know enough to modify weather on a continental or global basis, we shouldn't undertake to increase rainfall on a local basis.

Ironically, that man might become involved in weather modification research if three bills proposed by Sen. Henry Bellmon, R-Okla., were to be enacted. One of the bills would assign the Department of Commerce responsibility for gathering data on weather modification obtained in research and applications by at least a dozen federal agencies, state institutions and a number of private weather modification firms now in the business.

Probably each of the scientists who claims to be skeptical about the "state of the art at this point in time" would consider himself a prime prospect to head up a new research agency on the subject, if a large appropriation were offered.

Certainly, we need further research, but we should use knowledge now available to ease the present emergency. The state of the art will improve with use. It always has.