

## Current Dry Spell Predicted, Yet Many Just Now Conscious of It

**T**HE present widespread drouth and impending water shortage should not have caught us by surprise, but many people are becoming conscious of the situation now for the first time.

Newspapers, magazines and the electronic media are bringing the matter to our attention, after great damage has been done and rain-increase opportunities have been missed.

As with many problems, our weather and water predicament has been aggravated by our tendency to live only for the present, giving too little attention to the future.

We want fair weather to go to the lake, without considering that it takes rainy weather to fill the lake. We want fair weather for golfing, ignoring the necessity for rain to irrigate fairways and greens.

Moreover, we want fair weather for construction, for roadbuilding,

for shopping, for selling, for other reasons, disregarding the need for rain to grow crops, pastures and livestock to provide basic income to finance these activities.

Neither rural nor urban people have paid a great deal of attention to repeated warnings that the decade of the 1970s would be a repeat of the dry years of the 1950s, perhaps as bad as the "Dust Bowl" days of the 1930s.

Such a warning was published in The Farmer-Stockman magazines in 1969. It was made by Dr. Irving P. Krick, private weather expert. Other private meteorologists have made similar forecasts, but government weather services have not.

When drouth developed, scientific bureaucrats rushed in, not to alleviate the drouth but to study it. They want to continue inconclusive research they have carried on for 25 years.

At the same time, a number of Oklahoma agricultural and municipal leaders launched cloud-seeding projects that yielded good results. Lawton, Stillwater and Oklahoma State University got their lakes filled, while farmers and ranchers in a dozen counties received beneficial rainfall.

Unfortunately, only a few landowners contributed voluntarily to the financing, and those who paid for the work could not continue to carry the whole load. The projects were turned off when rains came, and they are dormant now.

The legislature enacted laws to allow weather districts to vote small assessments to pay for cloud seeding, but propositions failed in the few places that tried it.

Perhaps voters were confused by contradictory views presented by researchers concerned more about appropriations than about drouth, by professors armed with outdated textbooks, by negative meteorologists or global-minded reformers interested in changing the world's climate and by demands of ordinary citizens looking for rain.

The drouth is here and prospects are that it may continue a couple of years longer. If we are surprised by this long-expected dry spell, we may be even more surprised some morning if we turn on the faucet and nothing comes out.