

City Feels Grip of Federal Agencies

OKLAHOMA CITY officials have expressed surprise at the extent of control over municipal water resources held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and by imperious directions issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding water quality.

Whatever resentment they might have may be justified but their surprise indicates that they have not been noticing what is happening in Washington. There is much more of this to come.

Congress has delegated a tremendous amount of lawmaking authority to scores of federal agencies and they are using it.

Authority assumed by the Corps of Engineers over state waters has been well-publicized. It is extensive and the full scope of power given the Corps under Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act has not yet been applied. It includes lakes, ponds, rivers, creeks and adjacent wetlands.

Environmentalists filed and won a suit demanding that the Corps and EPA be required to expand regulations covering "the waters of the

United States," which includes the waters of Oklahoma.

Newly issued directions by EPA that Oklahoma City install a charcoal filtration system to remove an alleged cancer-causing element were issued under existing regulations.

The risk of cancer that might be present is considered to be small, but environmentalists in charge of EPA are backed by a law that allows them to demand absolute perfection, according to standards they may spell out under congressional authorization.

Similar powers are held by the Food and Drug Administration, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and others.

The estimated cost of \$6 million to remodel Oklahoma City's water filtration system to EPA's specifications is small compared to what EPA has required industries and businesses to spend.

Some companies have been unable to raise funds to finance changes and have closed down plants or gone out of business, con-

tributing materially to the unemployment rate of recent years.

Where businesses have bowed before federal bureaucrats and made adjustments demanded, costs have been passed along to consumers through higher prices. Cars are an example. This has contributed in a large way toward acceleration of inflation.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA aren't the only federal agencies with authority over Oklahoma waters. The Bureau of Reclamation retains extensive control over lakes built under its jurisdiction, as well as their tributaries.

The impact of the federal control monster is just now being realized by some people, because costs are coming out where they can see them. The trend has been under way for many years.

As long as citizens demand more services, more attempts at problem-solving and more subsidies from Washington, the transfer of power to the nation's capital will continue. One day it might become absolute, as it has in other countries.