

Rainmaking Clouded by Bureaucracy

MORE than 30 years after scientists determined that rainfall can be stimulated, or increased by seeding clouds with certain materials a federal agency has admitted that usable technology is scientifically possible and "within sight."

Many Oklahomans have been convinced since the 1950s that this is the case. A number of locally-financed weather modification projects have operated in the state, with considerable success.

When weather modification first was proposed, the U.S. Weather Bureau (now the Commerce Department's National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration, or NOAA) wouldn't touch it.

The idea was kicked around until scientists, agencies and institutions discovered that weather modification was a good vehicle for prolonged, well-financed research projects.

This might not have been so bad, except that many of those engaged in the studies opposed utilization of weather modification until they ar-

rived at their conclusions or money ran out. They took myopic views of weather modification at times when Oklahoma and other areas were critically in need of rain.

Operation of Oklahoma projects has been intermittent, not for lack of good results but for lack of consistent funding.

Financing of projects by contributions failed because many who benefited did not pay their share. Efforts to raise money by assessments failed because voters opposed new taxes, however small.

Repeated requests for the legislature to provide state matching funds for county weather modification districts died when lawmakers got vague or negative responses from researchers.

Now because state and local governments did not come up with continuing weather modification projects, financed and directed by local boards, we may expect federal weather control.

Probably bureaucrats in Kansas City or Dallas will have authority to

decide when to seed Oklahoma rain clouds.

The 17-member Commerce Department's Weather Modification Advisory Board has recommended a 20-year program of "Weather Resources Management." That means federal control.

Proposed appropriations of \$87 million, later to be increased to \$90 million a year, are not unreasonable, considering value of additional rainfall to agriculture and municipalities.

In tackling questions about cloud seeding, the committee report said "There is no evidence that increases in rain or snow in one area decreases them in other areas." Neither is there evidence that hazardous air pollution occurs.

But it is too bad that another aspect of our lives may be directed by federal bureaucrats because local and state governments have not assumed responsibility for local projects.

We need more rain, but not more government from Washington!