

Who Should Control the Weather?

IN MIDSUMMER, when rain clouds are scarce, people wonder why somebody doesn't do something to make it rain.

In springtime, when rainstorms usually are frequent and often violent, the same public may want the showers turned off.

No matter what the weather is, it seldom will suit everyone on any particular day. Farmers and home gardeners may want rain to make their plants grow. Golfers and homebuilders will want fair skies until they complete their rounds or get a roof covered.

An individual may have weather conflicts. A farmer may need rain for his pastures or peanuts, but want dry weather to harvest wheat or put up hay. We want the weather we want whenever we want it.

Nature doesn't deliver it that way. Neither will the government, regardless of trends toward centralized weather control.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says its national rain and snow forecasts are about 85 percent accurate for 12 to 18 hours and about 75 percent cor-

rect for up to 36 hours.

Private forecasters claim they can forecast farther and longer ahead, using the same NOAA data plus their own expertise.

Tornadoes are an irregular but normal weather phenomena in Oklahoma. Folks would like to know when they are coming and, in fact, some residents have become pretty competent (without radar) in detecting tornadic conditions and identifying typical tornado clouds.

Their advance time record may be as good as that of the National Severe Storms Laboratory at Norman, whose average for spotting tornadoes is reported to be 21.4 minutes before they struck. That's with Doppler radar and a staff of about 60.

"Modification of the weather is scientifically possible," says Dr. Irving P. Krick, whose firm has operated most of the rain increase projects that have been carried on in Oklahoma. But in order to modify weather satisfactorily, we need to predict it reliably. When we can do both, great savings of lives and money may be expected.

Readers Digest (May 1980) raises the question of "Who Will Control the Weather?" in discussing weather modification. It reports that government and private cloud seeders will operate over 125,000 square miles in 20 states this year to increase rain or snowfall or to prevent hail and dispel fog.

Usually this is done by dispersing artificial nuclei, such as silver iodide crystals, into rain clouds.

The magazine says there is no such thing as natural weather any more, because of smoke, smog and other influences of civilization.

Now, it appears that these influences of civilization may become subservient to influences and directions from political agencies. The government General Accounting Office has issued a report pointing out that progress of weather modification programs has been hindered because no one is in charge.

So, a new and larger weather agency or bureau is predictable, whether the weather is or not.