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BIO SCIENCE

Thomas Jefferson was probably the last public figure of note in America who could exercise at once the combined talents of the man of letters, the scientist, and the politician. He was a rare man in any time, but he would be most extraordinary in our present society.

As the complex America which he foresaw has grown, individual talents have telescoped. Belatedly, as descendants of Jefferson's various disciplines, we have discovered that we must communicate more effectively with each other if we are to deal with our mutual society and political problems. More important, we have discovered that we must combine our talents more effectively if we are to translate public concern into action on a particular issue. The environment is an excellent example. It is one thing to declare the right to environmental quality and to advocate an ecological ethic; it is another thing to identify and define the countless factors affecting the environment; and still another to chart a course through the labyrinth to achieve the goal.

Inadequate cooperation in the past between our two professions has been one reason why we are behind in our battle against pollution. Politicians have failed to support enough research, and scientists generally have failed to inform and mobilize the public.

It has been difficult in the past to find support for the International Biological Program, one of the few research programs which

approaches the scale and the scope of the environmental crisis. This year, however, the prospects appear good for a Joint Resolution which I have introduced in support of the program. In another effort to reverse the past lack of support and to provide for the necessary research capacity in this field, Senator Howard Baker and I will introduce legislation in this session of Congress to develop a system of National Environmental Laboratories. Such laboratories would direct resources and talents to environmental issues in the manner in which we have applied them to atomic energy and space.

Nevertheless, even with all the recent public clamor, political rhetoric and press attention America still may not understand the potential effects of what Rene Dubos describes as our "ability to modify (the earth) and shape it, thus determining the evolution of (our) own future social life through a continuous act of creation."

Scientists, as well as politicians, have an increasing obligation to make the public aware of what is at stake. To fulfill this obligation will take courage. It will not be easy to convince America that our profit-motivated, consumer-oriented technology may be producing more than we need, more than we can afford, and more environmental dangers than we can control.

Scientists can meet these growing responsibilities only by moving out of the academic community. You must take your knowledge and the results of your research to the public and to the legislative bodies in terms which the layman can grasp.

This nation is prepared to move in the direction of improving environmental quality, but we have not yet fully defined those directions, the extent of the financial commitment we are willing to make, or the

most effective means to achieve our goals. The less time all of us spend talking among our colleagues in endless conferences and meetings, and the more time we spend working with each other and with the public, the better our prospects will be for a livable world.