

WEATHER (Continued)

past 100 years. Tremendous consumption of coal and oil have put enough carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in that time to cover those regions with an invisible but effective "soot-shield." Like a greenhouse, this keeps the sun's heat from radiating away at its usual speed and thus gradually raises temperatures.

Recent U.S. studies in the arctic indicate that a variation of this phenomenon takes place in nature. When temperatures in the land of the ice caps fall below 22 degrees subzero, a fog of ice crystals develops. This "fog" effectively lessens the formation of cold air at the surface by reducing radiation of solar energy from both ice and atmosphere. Trapped near the ground, that heat raises air temperatures not only on the spot but in whatever regions the warmed air is blown to.

Dr. Wexler told a University of Chicago audience last Spring that our Weather Bureau's polar researchers are working on a way to produce this ice fog artificially over the entire arctic during the Winter months. He estimated that it would raise the mean temperature of the arctic as much as 20 degrees and warm the icy blasts that sweep down on the United States. Our northern Winter-ridden cities would in this way enjoy a comparable improvement in weather from November to March.

To form such an enormous fog six to twelve miles deep over the top of the world would call for vast quantities of water vapor. But the arctic ice pack and the frigid oceans are practically inexhaustible sources of that. All we'd have to do is to vaporize them. How? Use atom bombs, said Wexler.

A less drastic method of warming the arctic for farming was advanced several years ago by the late mathematical genius and Atomic Energy Commissioner, Dr. John E. von Neumann. He proposed that we use aircraft to "dust" the ice fields with a fine coal dust. By preventing radiation of solar energy, this cheap refinement of the "greenhouse effect" would reclaim thousands of square miles of subarctic farmland and at the same time warm up the Winter winds for our ultimate stateside benefit.

By warming the arctic air, both atom bombs and coal dust pose problems that we must cope with. Warmer arctic air would speed disintegration of the polar ice cap by preventing normal Winter replenishment of ice lost to Summer melt and evaporation. This could have disastrous consequences of global dimensions.

There are 350 million cubic miles of water on earth. Put another way, if all land and water were evened out, everything would be 8,000 feet below sea level. Of these 350 million cubic miles of water, not quite 1 percent is tied up in ice and snow, and a lot less is suspended in the atmosphere.

This ice and snow concentration is unevenly divided among the arctic ice cap and the world's glaciers, which cover 10 percent of all land areas, or six million square miles. The antarctic continent alone is covered by 86 percent of those glaciers to a depth of 10,000 feet—more than one and a third times larger than the United States and its territories. Greenland has 10 percent, and the remaining 4 percent is in the mountains of the temperate zones.

WHAT HAS all this to do with weather control? Plenty. If we warm up the arctic and in the process melt the polar ice cap, global circulation of warmer air will in turn melt the world's glaciers. To project this risk to its worst conclusion, if all the glaciers melted they would raise the world's oceans 65 to 200 feet, inundating every coastal region for great distances inland. And there would be intermediate stages of disaster, too.

If weather control is that menacing, why not skip the whole thing? Isn't it better to do a little shivering around Spokane than to drown in warm salt water? Or wiser to go on wearing woolies in Minneapolis, Buffalo, and Boston than to have to head for the hills in a bathing suit? Yes, but it needn't be as bad as all that.

If we eventually build atomic heating stations on Hudson Bay to modify arctic weather, studies now under way show

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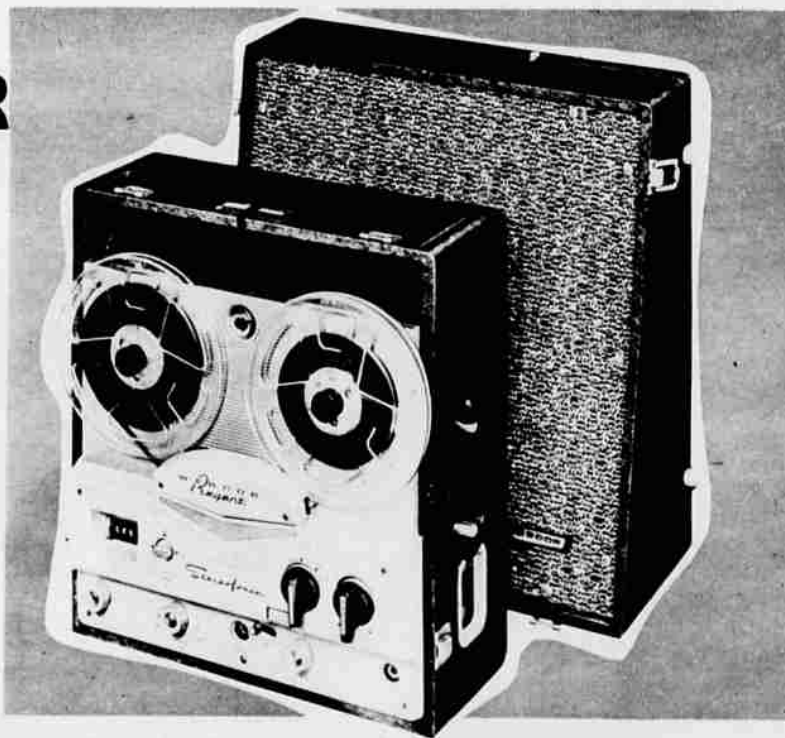
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