to see how it would be less evanescent than a New Year's resolution.

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Politics and pollution

Albert V. Crewe (PHYSICS TODAY, October, page 25) unfortunately shifts the burden of reducing pollution from the political or legal to the scientific sector. I think he makes a serious mistake, for this shift in emphasis subtly transforms the pollution problem from one of urgency to one that may be solved at our leisure, only after we have determined the rate at which industry may be allowed to discharge its wastes into the air and water.

"Of course we are not in danger of destroying ourselves." Here is the point: We may be in just such danger! What is called for is not scientific research, but radical national and international programs—legislation—to reduce contamination of the atmosphere (at least) to the lowest level compatible with existing technology. There is plenty of time later to relax restrictions on pollution when the problem is no longer pressing and when sufficient research has been carried out to justify such relaxation. Conversely, there is no time to await the results of tedious scientific research before introducing restrictions.

Pollution is thus a political problem. The main reason "they can't pass a law to . . ." is not scientific but political: Industry, forgetting about the many years it freely dumped its wastes into the air and water, would literally (and quite audibly) howl about the tiny fraction of its assets required for this long-neglected responsibility.

The role of the scientist is not to develop standards but to impress upon the public immediate need for tough, arbitrary standards.

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A CORRECTION: In PHYSICS TODAY, November, page 55 we would like to rectify three errors in the map of France. Lyon and Marseille should have been spelled in French for consistency. Clermont should be Clermont-Ferrand, which is located in the center of France. Saclay is misleading because it is a suburb of Paris in which the Atomic Energy Commission is located. □