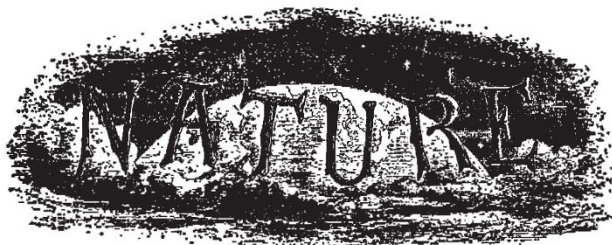


Welfare are being forced to make way for politically more acceptable replacements may seem a sign that both the superpowers are places in which scientific freedom is jeopardized by political influence. It may therefore be worth pointing out that the turmoil such as it is in the United States is not a parallel with what has happened to Medvedev in the Soviet Union but, rather, a proof that things are very different in the two countries. To begin with, there is nothing wrong with the convention that the heads of government departments and agencies should be politically appointed, so long as it is consistently applied. That a Republican Administration in Washington should prefer to decentralize the mental health clinics set up under the National Institute of Mental Health is at once a political decision and a predictable one. In a sense, Dr Stanley Yolles, who has now resigned from the National Institute of Mental Health, must be surprised that the pressure which forced him out has been so long in making its effect. But without doubt, it would be thoroughly demoralizing for the National Institutes of Health if the present director, first appointed by the Johnson Administration, were to be forced out. The doubts on this score arise simply because the present Administration has been almost consistently indelicate in its handling of similar situations, often going further within the bounds of convention than is strictly necessary. Those who operate the American system acknowledge this to be one of the discomforts of public office. But none of those now leaving, either because of pressure or from frustration, will find it hard to get a better job. The scandal of Medvedev is that, by all accounts, he has not merely been afflicted with personal indignity but robbed of the chance to do a job of work as well. It is to be hoped that somebody will soon make reparation.

100 Years Ago



WELL-WISHERS of the University of Oxford will rejoice to hear that the honorary degree of D.C.L. has been offered to Mr. Darwin. The state of Mr. Darwin's health unfortunately precludes him from accepting the proffered honour, but the scientific naturalists of this and other countries will none the less appreciate the compliment which has been paid to their great leader. It is all the more graceful as Mr. Darwin is not an Oxford, but a Cambridge man, a circumstance which the University of Cambridge seems to have forgotten; though by-and-by it will be one of her claims not to be herself forgotten.

WE are glad to announce that Mr. Geikie has arrived in England, and is in a fair way of recovery.

From *Nature*, 2, 127, June 16, 1870.

OLD WORLD

ENVIRONMENT

Politics of Pollution

No politician will deny that sin is much to be abhorred, and the same goes for pollution, although so far no party in the British election campaign has chosen to make the environment a major issue. The Liberal Party manifesto has almost nothing to say on the matter and only small sections on policies for the environment are to be found in the Labour and Conservative manifestos. Where the three parties disagree is on the question of whether control of pollution should be left to industry or imposed by the government.

The Conservatives have been firing occasional shots at the White Paper on the environment which the Labour government published a fortnight ago (see *Nature*, 226, 889; 1970). In an address to the National Society for Clean Air on June 5, Mr Christopher Chataway, Conservative spokesman on the environment, called the White Paper "extremely unsatisfactory" in its proposals for motor vehicle exhausts because, he said, it offered nothing to allay fears of the possible harm caused by carbon monoxide emissions. Shortages of smokeless fuel (which have already led to the suspension of smoke control orders for fifteen local authorities) were to be blamed on Labour's administrative muddles, Mr Chataway implied. Conservative policy, in contrast, would set dates for the achievement of defined aims instead of sticking to "generalized speech-making". True to their slogan of "less government", the Conservatives would leave the cleaning up of industrial muck to be done voluntarily by industry in the belief that factory owners will realize purification to be in their own interest.

The Labour Party, as might be expected, goes for more legislation, and is adamant that Conservative claims to control pollution by being more lenient with the polluters are wholly inadequate. The Liberals take a third view, because they are dedicated to the idea of decentralizing some of the power of Whitehall into a dozen regional assemblies. All environmental operations would be directed from this regional level so that, although pollution would be controlled from the outside, the strength of the control might vary from region to region.

Another issue relevant to the quality of the countryside is that of road traffic. With the help of the National Freight Corporation, Labour intends to relieve pressure on road space by transferring as much goods traffic as possible on to the railways, which have plenty of spare capacity. Conservative plans for building roads are based on the assumption that the proportion of freight that travels by lorry is fixed and that it would be pointless to encourage manufacturers to subject their products to a time-consuming train journey while roads are getting bigger and better all the time.

The Council for Nature has been trying to make more of the environment as an election issue by providing through its magazine *Habitat* a set of questions that could be put to rival candidates. Some of the questions, on oil, sewage, and pesticides, have been answered to the Council's satisfaction by the White