

Houston they tend to be chemical refuse. Moreover, he takes issue with the Chamber's conclusion that air-traffic problems in Houston are caused mainly by fog. "A lot of restriction of airline traffic is actually due to industrial dust that allows moisture to collect around the dust particles," he says.

Dr. Quebedeaux argues that the problem of automobile traffic has been disproportionately magnified by the Chamber, following the position of the Public Health Service. "Auto traffic can't even begin to produce the hydrocarbon fumes that you can get from one refinery," he says.

What about the State Water Pollution Control Board? "While the members who must now initiate action may be competent in their own fields," says Dr. Quebedeaux "not a single one is familiar with water pollution." He also says he thinks their attitude of "cooperation" with industry and their unwillingness to go to court reflect more desire to avoid controversy than to control pollution.

Since the state has taken over water pollution control in Harris County, with its 1,460,000 population, Dr. Quebedeaux says conditions have steadily deteriorated. Because of the sewage being dumped into at least one of the bayous that weave through Houston, odors are severe, and in the summer he anticipates an increase of water-spread diseases among children who play in some of the parks near Brays Bayou.

On the subject of air pollution, Dr. Quebedeaux is more optimistic. In fact, he feels that, with a few exceptions, the air pollution problem is well under control in the Houston area and will stay that way unless the state takes over. The air pollution program cut its teeth successfully back in 1956, with a suit that resulted in an order that each offending plant should present a time schedule for dealing with its problem. "The only defendant that did not keep its promise," he says, "was the City of Houston. Its fertilizer plant is still operating and still bad. . . . We have also had severe odor from some of its sewage treatment plants." Dr. Quebedeaux says the reason industry complies with the air pollution program in Houston is fear of court action, which he has shown he is willing to take.

The court-action muscle is necessary, he says, but no special pollution laws are necessary. His own most effective weapon has been common-law nuisance laws, with which he can base his charges on interference with the health of the individual or with his enjoyment of his property. He opposes codes specifying exactly how much of this or that can be discharged from one plant stack. "I'm better off, I feel, without having specified standards," he has explained. "My standard is how it affects the neighbors.

That way, you don't involve yourself in a smoke screen of a highly scientific nature."

It is my observation that the majority of the operators of industrial plants in the Houston area are aware of the need to prevent pollution. Dr. Quebedeaux admits that air pollution is not a serious problem in Harris County. Actually, it is becoming less of a problem each year. As new plants are built and old ones improved, air pollution control is being built into them, and great efforts are currently being made to prevent water pollution.

The Houston area sewage problem is the direct result of the rapid growth of the city. The population has increased faster than the capacity of treatment facilities. At times, some of the city's treatment plants are overloaded, but the situation has in no way reached a point where the public health has been affected.

On the whole, if air and water pollution in Harris County is not yet at an irreducible minimum, it is not being ignored. Efforts are being made to reach that point, and I think it will be done.

—OVETA CULP HOBBY.

Louisville: Law or License?

IT IS late spring and there is no lovelier part of America at this season than Kentucky's Bluegrass region. Famous old horses, like Citation, trot over the lush, rolling fields. The frisky young colts nip at each other playfully. The white fences stretch for miles. Around Lexington and Versailles, the new industrial plants are antiseptically modern and busy.

But every Kentuckian knows how deceptive this can be as a picture of his state. For only seventy air miles away begins the contamination of both land and water. There is erosion. There is vast waste, not only of the land but of human beings. Here begins the poverty belt of Appalachia.

In the western part of Kentucky is another blighted zone, a once handsome land now pocked by vast dunes of mud and whitish rock, where the streams are as poisoned as the ground.

The stinking mess that exists in parts of eastern and western Kentucky is the direct heritage of politically excused commercial plunder. It is the result of strip-mining turned loose, of loggers free to overcut the great forests at will, of oil and gas speculators permitted to

let the runoffs pollute the watersheds. Gone are the natural protections of the mountain towns; each year water gushing down the slopes of the strip-mine spoilbanks tears through these towns with mounting violence. Once all of it was beautiful and unspoiled, the "great meadow" and the "happy hunting ground" of Indian lore. Now thousands of acres are taken out of production yearly by the giant mining machines. The state's highest peak, 4,150-foot Black Mountain, which was a magnificent hunting area, is being torn apart by the great drilling machines. Once the water at Cumberland Falls State Park sparkled, but now it is often awash with slimy coal silt. The Green and Salt Rivers have been contaminated by salt-water runoff containing oil. Refuse from gas and oil wells has left streams unfit for cattle, and farmers are convinced that their underground water supplies are also becoming useless. One whole valley near the Kingdom Come State Park is being filled with sludge from a nearby mine. In Western Kentucky, the world's largest shovel throws up black monuments of slag and shale.

The strip-mining lobby is a potent

Pollution in Louisville—Kentucky's largest city under its umbrella of wastes.

—U.S. Public Health Service, Division of Air Pollution.



one. It has won its point by arguing that it creates jobs and that the land was poor before mining started. It is far poorer after they are through and state money has to go to fight the blight that is left.

What Kentucky needs is a state law that would prohibit strip and augur mining in the eastern mountains and require open-pit miners in the west to restore stripped land so it could be used for farming or timber-growing. But passage of such a law is hardly likely. Strip-mining is an easy way to get coal. It makes money for the operators, the truckers, the railroads, the barge lines, and the power industry.

The tragedy began early in the century before anyone had thought of strip-mining. In their innocence, the mountaineers deeded away any protection they had against destroying their land (and even their homes) to get to the coal. These deeds even gave the coal operators a right to pollute streams on land they did not own. All efforts to break these deeds have failed. Even owners of adjoining land have been unable to protect themselves from damage to their land done by strippers on the hillsides above. Study after study has brought forth the same indictment. One research project, conducted by Resources for the Future, concluded: "The coal industry in Kentucky has most decidedly not paid its way in meeting social costs—private profits and losses aside." A federal study, made in 1963, reported: "Present practices lay waste the landscape, pollute streams, deplete or destroy forests, exterminate wildlife, and clutter roadsides." A National Forest Service official commented bitterly: "The forests in Kentucky are being exploited much as they were generations ago. The loggers are squeezing out everything good and leaving the next generation to pay for their abuses." And a study by the Kentucky Geological Survey, a University of Kentucky division, damned the coal mine industry for polluting the streams with acid water, killing aquatic life, and making a great many streams useless for industrial or home water.

All this will change only when Kentucky's legislature decides to change the conservation law to prevent polluting by mine and oil and gas operators, as well as to insist on real reclamation of land. TVA has established four Appalachian demonstration sites to prove that reclamation, if not real restoration, can be done in mountain areas. Ironically, it has been TVA's demands for low-grade coal that has brought on the strippers—and resulted in the despoliation.

A few operators have undertaken on their own to restore the ravaged land. But coal strippers are basically earth

and mineral movers, not agronomists. The state will get to its work of reclaiming the torn land and of protecting its streams only when its legislators have the courage to stand up and defy the lobbyists.

Meanwhile, the mountain people ache over what is happening. Says big Charley Caudill at Whitesburg: "The biggest hurt we got is the young people leaving—and our doctors and our lawyers and our teachers. And our soil is all worn out. Such as that is no advantage to the hills." And Charles D. Richards, a former deep-mine operator who often flies over the mountain area where he has lived all his life, says of what he sees: "It makes my stomach turn."

These are a proud people, and they

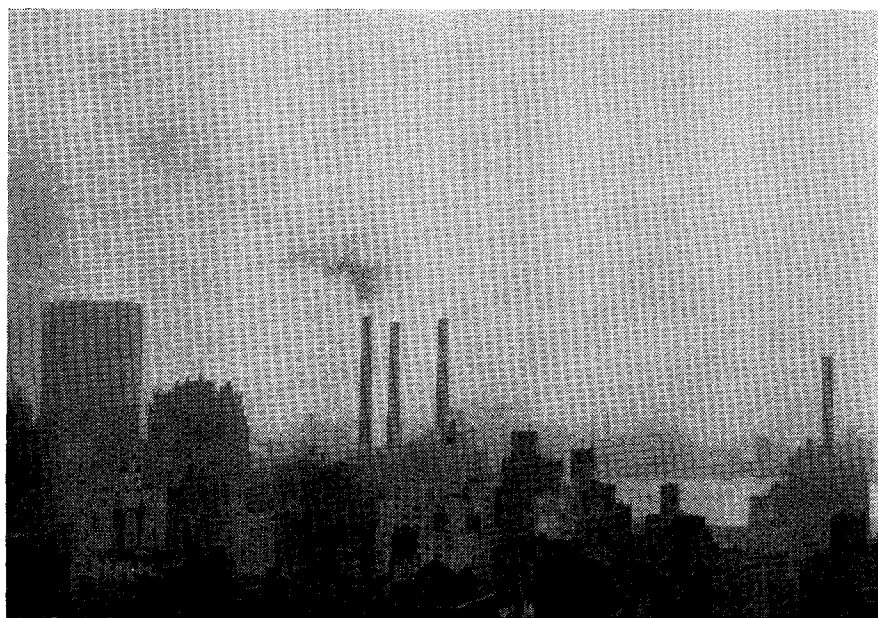
have been left to the mercy of the plunderers.

Mrs. Lena Landrum graduated from Eastern Kentucky State College at Richmond. On weekends she works in her father's store in Rowdy. On weekdays she teaches in Perry County, where, she reports sadly, 35 per cent of the second-graders are eating free lunches. "But when they get in the seventh or eighth grade, some won't take it," she says. "They think somebody's giving them something and we have to let them clean trays or something to make them think they're earning it."

So the plunder lobby hasn't yet contaminated the spirit—at least not of the people who deserve the protection their state has never seen fit to give them.

—NORMAN E. ISAACS.

New York: Too Little, Too Late?



—SR photo by N.C.

Hardly a day passes when Consolidated Edison's smokestacks don't violate New York City's laws. But improvement is promised.

NEW YORK CITY'S air pollution is no longer simply something to grouse about. It is a tangible, frightening evil. It has been blamed for contributing—under certain atmospheric conditions—to illness and even death.

No one recognizes this better than the city's Commissioner of Air Pollution Control, Arthur J. Benline, a retired Navy captain. Mr. Benline recently laid it on the line to a television audience with this indictment: "The air over our city is helping our citizens to shuffle off this planet at a much higher rate than they would ordinarily go. Yet there has not been any over-all demand from the public to clean up our dirty air."

New York's air is fouled with a monthly sootfall of sixty tons for every square

mile. Into the atmosphere is belched not only smoke from factory stacks—such as those of the plants of the Consolidated Edison Company—but also smoke from most of the 14,000 apartment-house incinerators of the five city boroughs. These waste-burners include 2,000 in houses operated by the New York City Housing Authority.

Additional poisons spew into the air in the form of chemicals from the exhaust pipes of thousands of automobiles that new highways, tunnels, and bridges continue to funnel into the city's streets.

The city fights all of these ills, but Commissioner Benline confesses that without adequate funds his battle is on too small a scale—like fighting a five-alarm fire in the Empire State Building