

EDITORIAL

1984 is upon us, and while other branches of society are busily comparing what Orwell said with today's reality, we are unable to do so, as "the environment" is one of the categories he omitted.

Strangely enough, the concept of environment as such, is not mentioned by Orwell if one excludes the prediction of the urbanization of the population, which he has seen from a purely sociological point of view —, although globally seen, environmental degradation and resource over-exploitation is that feature of society which has moved perhaps fastest in the past 35 years.

So, although he ignored us, we pay tribute to him on the cover, convinced that this was only an omission! In any case, we always shared his fear.

But in 1984, some effort is again being made to counteract negative developments,¹ for in addition to the regular conferences, this year will bring a spate of meetings dealing particularly with environmental matters.

Two UNEP meetings have recently taken place — both as part of the follow-up to the Montevideo law plan in 1982 (see vol. 8, No. 1). In general, one can say that the second meeting (concerning the exchange of information on potentially harmful chemicals, in particular pesticides, in international trade) did not progress in the way that the Governing Council had expected. Some participants questioned what potentially harmful chemicals were, and experts from several states wanted even to exclude pesticides from the exchange system — but how can one draw a line between pesticides and chemicals? No final decision was taken, but at least an interim information scheme was agreed upon, for a trial period. The outcome of the meeting on the environmentally sound management of hazardous waste had, fortunately, a more positive result. We shall report in detail on both discussions in the next issue.

"Prep-Com" (Law of the Sea) is meeting at present. Two IMO conferences are scheduled for the near future (see also page 5), and the UNEP Governing Council will meet in May. In June, the ESCAP Expert Group Meeting on the integration of environment into development — legislative and administrative aspects — will be held in Tokyo, to be followed by the OECD conference in Paris on Environment and Economics. On 24th of the same month, the Federal Republic of Germany has called a special conference on long-range air pollution (see vol. 11 No. 4, page 116). Also scheduled for the Summer, is a meeting of the preparatory committee for the review conference to the convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques.

The North Sea Conference is planned for the end of October and two conferences initiated by UNEP will take place in November — the world industry conference on environmental management, and the inter-parliamentary conference on the environment. The IUCN General Assembly is also scheduled for the same month.

1984 the year of the environment — or just another year of conferences? □