resources or biological systems of the planet." The new facility is scheduled to be completed in 1996.

President Orders Justice

Responding to charges that the poor and minority communities face a disproportionate risk from environmental pollution, President Clinton signed an executive order on Feburary 12 mandating that federal agencies identify and eliminate racial inequities from their environmental policies.

The order comes after more than a decade of environmental activism from grassroots organizations led by people of color. The order will have a significant impact on environmental health issues that disproportantely affect low income and minority communites such as lead poisoning, air pollution, exposure to pesticides, and water pollution.

"All Americans have a right to be protected from pollution—not just those who can afford to live in the cleanest and safest communities," Clinton declared after signing the order. "Today we direct federal agencies to make environmental justice a part of all that they do."

The order directs federal agencies to examine their programs for adverse health or environmental effects in low-income and minority communites, consider health hazards and environmental risk facing poor and minorities when conducting research, ensure that disadvantaged communities have access to public information on health and the environment, and conduct all environmental activities in a manner that does not discriminate against the poor and minorities.

Those involved in the struggle against environmental discrimination called the order an important step toward eliminating environmental racism. "This order says that at the highest level of government, environmental justice is being taken seriously," said Robert Bullard, author of *Dumping in Dixie*, a study of environmental racism in the south. "This will make federal agencies protect everyone equally. No longer will environmental protection be excluded from civil rights."

Charles Lee of the United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice agrees. "This order touches on the key points we in the environmental justice movement want to deal with and sets a clear direction for federal agencies to follow."

The order is not a law that can be contested in the courts but a set of instructions from the president to the head of federal agencies directing them to carry out certain actions. Federal agencies have one year to implement an environmental strategy that identifies and addresses environmental inequities in their policies, programs, and activities.

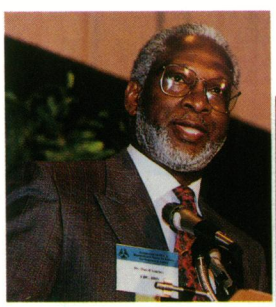
The presidential order came during a four-day conference held in Arlington, Virginia, on research needs and environmental justice. The conference was cosponsored by NIEHS, EPA, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and several other federal agencies. Nearly 500 people attended the event including EPA administrator Carol Browner, Ben Chavis, executive director of the NAACP, Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota), civil rights activist Dick Gregory, and representatives from six cabinet-level departments. The conference marked the first collaboration between community groups and governmental agencies in addressing the problem of environmental racism.

Congressional Scorecard

"The sorry truth is that today's Congress would not enact many of the landmark environmental laws of the late '60s and early '70s that turned the tide against pollution," said Jim Maddy, president of the League of Conservation Voters, in an introduction to the group's *National Environmental Scorecard* of the first session of the 103rd Congress. The scorecard, which rates the actions of the nation's representatives on environmental legislation, states that this year's scores reflect a sharp polarization between Republican and Democratic parties on environmental issues, often framed within the context of a debate over property rights.

According to a January 1994 poll by Environment Opinion Study, Republicans are just as likely to consider themselves environmentalists as Democrats; however, scores in the LCV report reflect that they often fail, more so than Democrats, to cast environmentally positive votes. The scorecard states that although strong initiatives were put forth under the leadership of the Clinton administration, these proposals came up against strong opposition from Republican leadership. Rank-and-file Republican politicians were often forced to choose between falling in line with party leadership (often allied with pro-business interests) or voting for environmental progress. The scorecard notes, however, that usually strong environmentalists in both parties, "faced with heavy lobbying from home-state industries, betrayed their best instincts and voted for the status quo."

Although the nation's lawmakers were rated on a wide range of environmental legislation issues, the LCV scorecard describes a prevailing theme throughout much of the debates. The debate centers around the movement, referred to by pro-


David Satcher

Phyllis Glazer

Kenneth Olden

Mildred McClain

Rose Marie Augustine

Benjamin Chavis

William Branson