

'Climatic effects not clear but are vital to mankind'

Many societies have migrated or changed dramatically due to climatic changes, John E. Griffiths, Texas A&M University Lecturer for '74-'75, said Monday. His presentation, "The Climate is Changing," is the second of this year's University Lectures Series.

Griffiths, a transplanted Englishman, summed up his lecture with a quotation from Fortune, a financial magazine: "From the an-thill perspective of a human lifetime, it is easy to perceive the sand-grain texture of weather but hard to comprehend the rolling topography of climate. Perhaps the most crucial insight to be gained from what the climatologists are learning is not some exact forecast of future climate, but rather that climate is, for calculational purposes, not a constant factor."

"Rather, it appears to be a wildly fluctuating variable and a more important problem than others that we know a lot more about. In writing the equations for mankind's survival we'd better allow plenty of margin for error."

Griffiths, a faculty member in the Meteorology department since 1967, used the western migration of the Vikings from the then increas-

ingly cold areas of Northern Europe as an example of the effects of changing climates. He noted that the average global temperature is only 15 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than during the last ice age when thick ice covered large portions of Europe and North America.

He said observation cannot prove that a change will continue for even one more year even if the change is statistically valid. A classic example of unsafe extrapolation came out in the late 1920s, he said.

He turned on a slide projector which illustrated two graphs on the screen behind him. The graphs closely followed each other for about half the horizontal axes.

After that point, the graphs rose and fell with no evident correlation. "These men found a correlation between the level of Lake Victoria and the occurrence of sun spots," he said. "Their theory was backed by observations from 1890 to 1930."

"They submitted their paper about here," he said, indicating the point on the graphs just before the correlation ended.

Griffiths said the determining causes of climate are solar radiation, the radiation receiving surface, the earth's rotation, topography and

land/sea configuration. He noted some of man's influences on these causes.

"Have you ever been to Houston?" he asked and he turned on a slide of the smog that often shrouds that city. He asked what effects the smog would have on the sun's radiation and how that would affect the local climate.

"When man builds cities, he makes them waterproof," he said. "Water is carried away quickly by storm sewers so there's much less to evaporate."

The greater amounts of heat absorbed by buildings and streets were also noted by the professor. He said the unknown effects these changes have on the climate cause greater amounts of rainfall over urban areas.

"A decrease of one degree Fahrenheit in winter temperatures would increase fuel consumption by 10 per cent in the Gulf area and by 3 to 4 per cent in the northern plains state," he said. "In some areas such as the tropical islands a decrease of one degree would be welcomed and hardly noticeable."

"Thus, we see that climatic changes of equal magnitude may have different practical impacts on different areas."

He said the human race may be poised on a thin climatic knife edge where the far-reaching effects of its activities are unknown.

"Perhaps the climate is balanced delicately," he said. "A small change may have far-reaching effects while an equal change in another parameter may simply induce perturbations that will soon be damped out."

Climate is a natural resource of an area, he said, and must be used wisely and respected.

Prof given radar patent

Dr. Robert R. Unterberger, professor of geophysics, was given financial support for exploring the Jefferson Island salt mine on the coast of Louisiana. He was notified that he was awarded a German patent for guiding the drilling of oil wells, both with radar.

He has been working with radar since World War II when he was trained and prepared to precede the U. S. invasion on to the shores of Japan by three days. He was to be left on the beach to jam the Japanese radar. Fortunately, the invasion didn't take place.

His work with radar continued and Unterberger is currently being funded in his research by five U. S. two Canadian and Belgium salt companies which are using the results of his radar mapping of their mines.

"The Diamond Crystal Salt Co. is starting a new mining level in their Jefferson Island mine at the 1,500 foot level," Unterberger explained. "We're probing the salt dome with radar to find the flanks. This avoids

any possibility of running into the edges which could cause collapse or flooding of the mine."

He and a crew of both graduate and undergraduate students are working and commuting weekends to complete the project.

Unterberger in his development of radar has found he can "look" through rock up to 5,000 feet to locate water pockets, faults and other mining problems. "We can see ahead and prevent mistakes and dangerous areas."

Salt mines are also often the locations for oil.

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