

Nation Set to Observe Earth Day

By GLADWIN HILL

Thousands of colleges, schools and communities across the country were getting ready yesterday for an unprecedented event: tomorrow's Earth Day—an interlude of national contemplation of problems and man's deteriorating environment.

Scores of marches and demonstrations are scheduled, along with mock funerals of "polluting" objects from automobiles to toilets. Countless lectures, workshops, nature walks and other observances are also planned.

Formally endorsed by officials ranging from the United Nations Secretary General, U Thant, to governors, mayors and school superintendents, the event promised to pre-empt the attention of a large part of the nation from customary pursuits.

Although the national Administration's posture toward Earth Day formalities has been one of calculated or involuntary detachment, organizers of the event see it as not only a massive alert to public awareness but also as the dawn of a new era of "ecological politics."

'To Make Life Better'

"Earth Day is a commitment to make life better, not just bigger and faster, to provide real rather than rhetorical solutions," says the organizers' main manifesto.

"It is a day to re-examine the ethic of individual progress at mankind's expense—a day to challenge the corporate and governmental leaders who promise change, but who short-change the necessary programs . . . April 22 seeks a future worth living."

Superficially, the observances will focus on the various "pollutions"—air, water, solid waste, chemicals, noise. But running deeper are currents of thought ranging from ending the Vietnam war to dispelling racial friction and underprivilege and achieving a "no-growth society" keyed to quality rather than quantity.

The "teach-in," as it was originally called, was suggested by Senator Gaylord Nelson, Democrat of Wisconsin, soon after last November's national demonstrations protesting the United States's Vietnam in-

Plans for Tomorrow Include Marches and Lectures

volvement. It was thought that if public sentiment could be galvanized on a negative theme it could be mobilized even more forcefully toward the positive goal of improved environment.

\$125,000 Spent

Since January a largely volunteer force of young people, working out of a small, shabby office in Washington, has been conducting a national campaign by mail, telephone, advertisements and personal visits to stimulate local participation.

About \$125,000 has been spent on the effort, with the money coming from conservation organizations, a few wealthy donors and many small contributors.

Today the headquarters reported that its mail had been running 2,000 to 3,000 letters a day, and that specific contacts over the past months indicated that at least 2,000 college, 10,000 grammar and high schools, and citizen groups in 2,000 communities would participate.

Senator Nelson and Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr., Republican of California, have been honorary co-chairmen of the campaign. Its national coordinator is Denis Hayes, a 24-year-old Stanford graduate from Camas, Wash.

Assailed as Diversion

The campaign has been widely derided by campus radicals and black militants as a "white middle-class diversion" of public attention from the issues of Vietnam and racial equality.

To this, Earth Day organizers' answer has been that a satisfactory environment encompasses peace, civil rights and an end to poverty, but that no such causes will have meaning if the globe's physical deterioration is not arrested.

By ironic coincidence, the Washington headquarters of the past year's Vietnam protest demonstrations announced Sunday that it was closing up shop. It cited the Administra-

tion's commitment to the withdrawal of troops.

The theme of a physically imperiled globe has received extensive support among scientists, some of whom insist that the present rate of ecological deterioration—such as contamination of the atmosphere with combustion products and poisoning of the seas with chemicals—could result in an uninhabitable world within a generation or two.

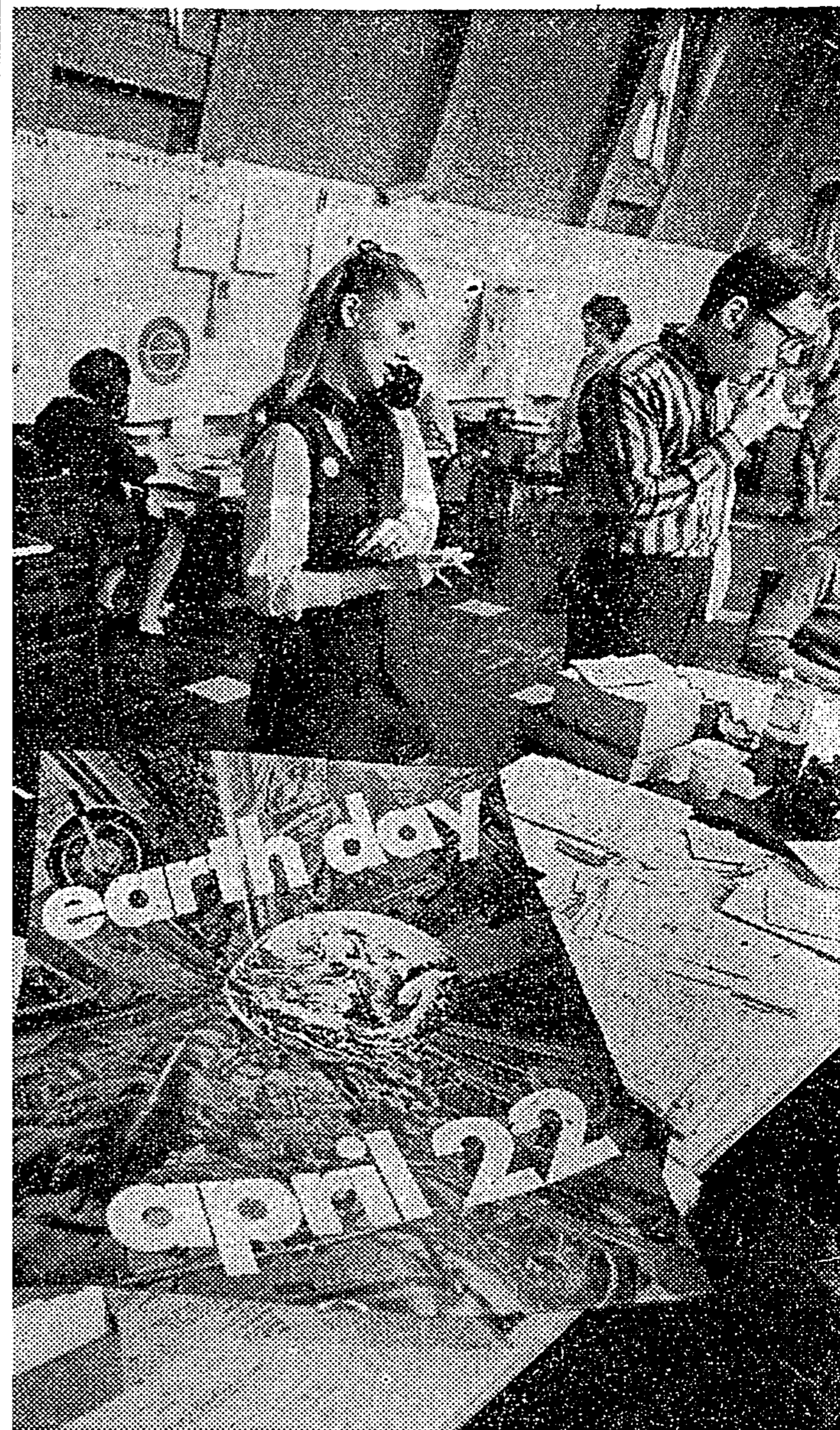
Drive to Continue

Many schools and colleges have Earth Day programs extending through this week and beyond, and the officials of Environmental Action, Inc., the national organization, have already decided to keep it in existence as a national coordinating agency.

"We feel that the most important achievement of April 22d already has happened," said Stephen Cotton, one of the principal organizers. "That is the organization of groups and the establishment of a solid base in communities. Most of them say they're going beyond the 22d, and we're going to be working with them."

At least several dozen members of Congress and a number of Federal officials will be participating in Earth Day activities all over the country, although there is little or no formal Federal involvement.

Teach-in leaders, wary of such involvements lest it appear that the movement has been "captured" by the Nixon Administration, said they had turned down a White House invitation in recent weeks for a discussion session because "we didn't feel there was a great deal to chat about."



The New York Times
'TO MAKE LIFE BETTER': Members of Environmental Action Coalition, New York Theological Seminary building.