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DRIVE FOR EXCESS PURITY CALLED ENERGY DRAIN

The effects of environmental overkill have contributed significantly to American's serious energy and fuel shortages, according to Dr. Irwin W. Tucker, president of the Council for Environmental Balance.

In a recent speech in Louisville, KY, Dr. Tucker declared that "by overemphasizing the need for purity, and our ability for achieving that purity, we have compounded our errors to the point where our local and national economic and physical structure is genuinely threatened.

"Had we taken a more responsible and enlightened position on sulfur oxides, nuclear power, outer continental shelf and Alaskan oil drilling," he said, "we conceivably could be nearly self-sufficient instead of in the precarious position we now find ourselves."

AIR POLLUTION COSTING BILLIONS; SULFUR OXIDES ARE MAIN CULPRITS

National costs for damage from air pollution totaled $16.1 billion in a recent year, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates. The agency believes the figure to be conservative.

EPA's report on air pollution damage in 1968 is based on information from 36 published and unpublished studies. Included in the damage figure is $5.2 billion for residential property, $4.7 billion for materials, $6.1 billion health and $1 million for vegetation.

Economic impact of air pollution on animals and aesthetic effects were not included because of inconclusive data, EPA said.

Most damage cost—$8.3 billion—was attributed to sulfur oxides. Particulate matter was the next costliest pollutant ($5.9 billion) followed by oxidants ($1.2 billion) and nitrogen oxides ($8 million).

Emissions from stationary source fuel combustion were said to cause most damage—$7.9 billion. Major costs attributed to other sources were $3.5 billion from industrial processes, $1.5 billion from transportation, $4 million from solid waste disposal (incineration, open burning and $2.8 billion from miscellaneous categories such as agricultural burning and smoldering coal refuse.

Cost of Air Pollution Damage: A Status Report (AP-85) is available for 65 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Researcher Reports

SUN CAN DEGRADE PCBS, BUT SOME BYPRODUCTS ARE MORE TOXIC

Sunlight apparently can accomplish what heat, chemicals and microbes have been unable to do—change PCBs, known to be worldwide pollutants, into other substances. Unfortunately some of the new substances formed are more toxic than the original PCBs, the American Chemical Society learned at its recent national meeting in Chicago.

PCBs are industrial chemicals that have been widely used as nonconducting fluids in electrical transformers, as heat transfer fluids and as plasticizers or solvents in paints, adhesives, sealants and printing inks.

Their resistance to degradation, which made PCBs popular in industry, has made them undesirable in the environment, where they have been reported to accumulate in the food chain and have an adverse effect on wildlife.

Only 30 minutes of irradiation with simulated sunlight changed one particular PCB 2,2,4,4,6,6-hexachlorobiphenyl) into nearly 80 compounds —the majority of which had been introduced with oxygen. These oxygen-containing photoproducts "showed a pronounced increase in toxicity" to the test species—banana flies—reported Dr. Christoffer Rappe, professor of organic chemistry at the University of Umea in Sweden.

This photochemical means to destroy PCBs should not be used unless conditions are chosen to avoid any formation of oxygenated products, Dr. Rappe pointed out in a summary, which contained no comment about similar processes in nature.

In Oregon

CONTAINER LAW CUTS BOTTLE LITTER

A new beverage container law in Oregon is reported to have reduced can and bottle litter along the state's roads by 81 percent in the winter months of 1972-73 compared with the winter months of 1971-72, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

This finding is from an EPA publication "Oregon's Bottle Bill: The First Six Months." The report is based on statistics from the Oregon State Highway Department, other state sources and personal contacts with industrial representatives.

The Oregon law, the first of its kind in the country, affects containers of soft drinks and beer. It went into effect Oct. 1, 1972. The law requires: (1) a minimum two-cent refund to purchasers on the return of beer, malt beverage and carbonated soft drink containers acceptable for reuse by more than one manufacturer or (2) a five-cent refund on soft drink and beer containers acceptable to only one manufacturer.

One early effect of the law, according to the pamphlet, was the elimination of the non-returnable soft drink and beer bottle, and near elimination of the beer and soft drink can.

NOTED AND QUOTED

"The proper balance between environmental protection and economic health will be decided in the long run by the public . . . It is up to those of us in business to see that the public has access to objective comparisons of costs and benefits . . . it is no less the responsibility of the environmentalist . . . to use his own expertise toward rational discourse rather than emotional activism."

—Dr. Eric A. Walker, vice president of Aluminum Company of America, in a speech to the Public Utility Buyers' [illegible] of Louisville, Ky.

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