

New Plant Head At Chamber Luncheon

A total of 58 members and guests heard A. J. Pokorny, vice president and general manager of the American Hoechst corp. Bayport works, at the first La Porte-Bayshore Chamber of Commerce membership luncheon Friday, Feb. 17.

The lunch was catered at St. John's Episcopal Church fellowship hall by John Karageorgos of Mediterranean gardens.

Pokorny who was in charge of the search for the best location for the facilities said "Bayport was, without question, our first and best choice. The industrial concept of Bayport with its pipeline spaghetti bowl, deep water port, accessibility of raw materials and energy, and best of all, its history of welcoming industry were all deciding factors."

Bayport is also very close to some major customers, he added.

"We are going to live in the

neighborhood and we want the best for ourselves, our families and our employees," he said.

A problem of name identification for many people was solved by Pokorney. He said the name Hoechst, pronounced phonetically comes out Herxt. He said he learned to say the name after the company acquired Foster-Grant Co. in Baton Rouge in 1975 where Pokorny had been employed since 1955.

The new facility at Bayport to be completed early in 1980 going onstream later that year will be part of an organization that dates back to 1863 when seven employees began making dyes in a shed near Frankfurt, Germany, he said.

In something over 100 years the company has grown to a market of almost \$10 billion in 1977.

"Growth has been a tradition with Hoechst over the years," he said. "Today our parent company has branches in 120 countries around the world."

The company moved into the U.S. in 1953, with \$1 million in sales that year. In 1977 sales are expected to be about \$300 million.

More than 9,000 people are employed throughout the U.S., Pokorny said. Headquarters are in Bridgewater, N.J., but a district office has been open in Dallas several years.

Some of the more familiar products of the American Hoechst company include Foster Grant sunglasses; polyester fibers used in clothing, carpeting and upholstery; plastics for food packaging, appliances, dishes, record albums, blisterpacks, etc.; offset printing plates; dyes and pigments for paints, felt pen markers, clothing and cars; pharmaceuticals like Lasix, a leading diuretic; diagnostic agents for medical laboratories; plastic for piping.

Pokorny showed a series of slides illustrating uses of the Hoechst products in American homes.

Styrene and high density polyethylene will be major products of the Bayport plant, Pokorny said. The company has 24 years' experience in styrene monomer production and 23 in producing high density polyethylene.

"Our record of safety, health, performance and our good neighbor reputation are well known in Baton Rouge and other cities in the U.S. and around the world," he said.

Pokorny outlined how the Bayport site was chosen. A common site for two facilities was sought since both use a

common raw material, he said, and both make a product for the plastics market. So "it made good sense to plan on constructing both at a single location."

At the close, Pokorny fielded questions from the audience.

Those who posed questions were Kathy Henderson of Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association; Brent Miller of Harris County Commissioner Tom Bass' office; Rufus Smith of La Porte.

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