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Growing pains

SIR: American Hoechst's president (C&EN, June 12, page 12) casually referred to "harassment" by civic groups as delaying the company's proposed Bayport plant. The term is "democratic due process." If Mr. Brookhuis doesn't understand the difference, perhaps he should transfer to Hoechst A.G., where in Germany the National Kohlenwerke has the power to level whole towns in the name of progress; maybe Brookhuis can win the same consideration for Hoechst.

Hoechst proposes to build in the purlieus of seven established bayshore communities. Hoechst's property line is only a few hundred feet from people's homes at some points! Since many of the bayshore residents work in the chemical industry and/or have technical backgrounds, they understand with a terrible clarity the consequences of a major accident and they are fearfully aware of our lack of knowledge of the long-term effects of exposure to low-level emissions of suspected carcinogens.

Hoechst has touted the proposed plant as one of the "cleanest and safest ever built." Unfortunately that's not clean enough. For example,

it was discovered during subsequent Texas Air Control Board hearings on the proposed adjacent Bechtel-Goodrich plant that the fugitive chlorine emissions from Bechtel-Goodrich and the fugitive and calculated vent emissions of styrene and ethylbenzene from Hoechst are of sufficient concentration to form an extremely potent lacrimator. This lacrimator plagued Dow's Midland facility in the 1940's [Air Pollution and Smoke Prevention Association of America, *Proceedings*, 45, 61 (1952)] and the Washington Bottom Area near Parkersburg, W.Va., in the late 1960's [National Center for Air Pollution Control (HEW) Technical Report, "Parkersburg, W.Va.—Marietta, Ohio, Air Pollution Abatement Activity" March 1967, and subsequent addenda].

I and many others do not regard Hoechst as a desirable close neighbor. I do not feel that our opposition to the site location, which has been expressed through the proper regulatory channels, is harassment.

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