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Pollution War: City on the Offensive

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Letters to the Editor

Pollution War: City on the Offensive

To the Editor:

Contrary to the suggestion of your April 14 editorial, "Mr. Aurelio's Image," the Department of Air Resources does not practice government by image-making. We are attacking air pollution from a multitude of sources on many levels.

The initiative on automotive sources does not mean we have "downgraded" the "upgrading of incinerators" and oil burners. Approximately 60 per cent of our staff of 260 continues to be devoted to enforcement of upgrading laws. With the final denial by the United States Supreme Court of the landlord's challenges to the law, we are now making rapid progress. Eleven violating incinerators have been sealed, with more on the way. Many hundreds of contracts for new refuse compactors have recently been signed. Ask any major landlord or public agency whether there's been any let-up in pressure to get this job completed by the end of 1972.

In addition, a new industrial pollution task force has opened a drive on the 6,000 industrial polluters in the city. Over sixty notices to seal equipment have been issued.

If the City Council acts rapidly on the pending air-pollution control code, the greatest reductions to date of

sulfur dioxide will occur this fall, and controls will be placed on important contributors to photochemical smog and other pollutants, such as lead and asbestos.

The exhibit at the Automobile Show was never intended to convey an administration image but rather to introduce new segments of the public to a different way of looking at the use of urban space and the role of the car in the center city and to inform them of the city's leadership in developing low-pollution vehicles for urban use. The exhibit was a first step in building apparently still needed public support for major traffic restrictions.

This education process will continue throughout the next six months, opening the public's eyes to the true cost of midtown traffic congestion, in terms of noise, air pollution, litter, time lost, threats to personal safety, sacrifice of valuable urban space, inefficiency of delivery of goods and the creation of barriers to personal communication, which is what a city is all about. When this is more generally understood, the plans of those of us who dream of a more human city will be able to be translated into reality.

ROBERT N. RICKLES
Commissioner, New York City
Department of Air Resources
New York, April 14, 1971