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July 31, 1983

William Ruckelshaus  
Director  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ruckelshaus:

I am writing this in response to the E.P.A. request for feedback regarding the Tacoma smelter. Having lived in Tacoma for six years and hoping to return there, after finishing my Master of Arts degree at Luther Northwestern Seminary, I am vitally concerned with this issue.

As a runner, I ran hundreds of miles through the beautiful trails of nearby Point Defiance Park, and it greatly disturbs me that there is a strong likelihood of inhaling harmful arsenic emissions, which negates the health-enhancing qualities of running. Many people run and hike on those trails, as well as taking their children on picnics or to the Point Defiance zoo. As a former Washington resident, you probably have taken your family to enjoy the beauty of Point Defiance and are aware of the uniqueness of the park.

The acknowledged health risks of arsenic emissions won't show up statistically for years, but clean air is the right of every citizen. I am not indifferent to those people employed by Asarco who would choose to "take their chances" with the air quality, but I believe placing Asarco company profits ahead of the public health is unconscionable. The faulty argument, "it hasn't harmed me yet," is a common rationalization used by chain-smokers, heavy drinkers, drug addicts, and many others.

If Asarco cannot or will not take all the necessary measures to eliminate arsenic and other harmful emissions, then I advocate elimina-

ting the smelter. Asarco has poisoned the air long enough (all the way across the Sound to Brown's Point, when the wind is blowing in that direction). I would hope that Asarco employees will receive assistance in finding suitable employment commensurate with their skills, longevity, and salary if it finally has to boil down to the dichotomy: clean, non-arsenic air or Asarco jobs.

Based on past action and inaction, the E.P.A. has been widely perceived as being in industry's "hip pocket" and actually in opposition to the environment it is charged to protect. Deciding for clean air could serve as an example of an agency beginning to act sensitively and seriously towards environmental issues. Your decision, if endorsing Asarco, could be interpreted as one more example of the widely held perception of E.P.A. callousness to the environmental protection of the American people. I appeal to you, sir, on behalf of the elderly, the many users of Point Defiance, and Tacoma's children, to decide for clean air and against Asarco. Knowing what we do, could you raise your family with peace of mind living next door to that smelter? Thank you.

Sincerely,  
*Richard L. Swenson*  
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