

THE TACOMA SMELTER
HEARINGS IN OLYMPIA MAY 4 WILL DECIDE FUTURE

Beginning May 4 at 10 a.m. the State Pollution Control Agency will hear an appeal from the Tacoma smelter asking for a "variance" from the Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency's plan to control the smelter's polluting emissions. Asking for a variance simply means that the smelter has a plan of its own to propose. The two plans are outlined below:

PUGET SOUND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY'S PLAN

1. By the end of 1975 90% of the sulphur must be eliminated from the smelter emissions.
2. To insure that the 90% figure is met on time, by mid-1973 the smelter will have to remove 51% of the sulphur.
3. In mid-1973 the smelter will have to submit to the Agency a definite plan showing how it will go about meeting the 1975 deadline.

SMELTER PLAN

1. After much pressure the smelter now says it will remove 51% of the sulphur by mid-1973.
2. No promise or guarantee that 90% of the sulphur will ever be removed. This means that the smelter is willing to spend only 1/5 of the total cost required to meet the 90% figure.
3. Modify the ambient(moving) air standards. This means that the smelter wants permission to drop more pollution on such places as Olympia or Seattle. This could lead to the smelter's promising another worthless tall stack "solution" to its pollution in 1975.
4. The Agency must not be permitted to impose more \$250 a day in fines. This means that if the smelter makes a violation once in a day then it might as well make a few more because the fine will be the same. The \$250 a day fine scheme would add up, at the very most, to \$90,000 a year, a small sum for a big operation.

OUR HEALTH

According to numerous studies by doctors and scientists, the 90% figure is necessary to protect the health of everyone in the Puget Sound region. The smelter gives off 250 to 500 tons of sulphur each day, accounting for 80% of this pollutant in the Sound area. Among the 3 tons of particulate matter poured out each day by the smelter are some potentially very dangerous poisons - arsenic, cadmium, lead. Every year the smelter drops 44 tons of arsenic and 44 tons of lead on the Tacoma area. Let's look at the health effects of some of these emissions:

SULPHUR OXIDES - Chest constriction, headache, vomiting, death from lung and respiratory ailments
ARSENIC - Jaundice, breaks down red blood cells, damages kidneys
LEAD - Brain damage, convulsions, mental retardation, sexual impotence

In considering the health effects we should remember that they are worse for children and growing people than they are for adults.

The smelter's record in caring about our health is miserable. In a year and a half period (to mid-'70) it violated the existing mild standards 282 times. In one month alone there were 450 complaints by area residents who found it hard to breathe. So the agency upgraded its standards in August, 1970. The smelter has been in violation of these standards every day since then.

THE TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS EXIST

The smelter gives the impression that it cannot meet the Agency's 90% figure because the technical solutions do not exist. Yet the Corps of Engineers in Seattle has a book called Control Techniques for Sulphur Dioxides outlining workable methods. Monsanto Corporation already has a plan in operation that removes 90% of the sulphur (C and EN, July 4, 1966). You have to remember that the smelter showed bad faith in claiming that its tall stack proposal would solve the pollution problem.

OUR COMMUNITY

Property damage resulting from the smelter's operation is estimated at between 2½ to 3 million dollars. Within 4 days sulphur comes to ground in the form of sulphuric acid. This acid rapidly attacks the different metals in buildings, cars, machines, clothing, furniture. Its effects on vegetation is disastrous. Concentrations of sulphur now emitted by the smelter can cause severe damage to crab apple, aspen, birch, Douglas fir, tulips, violets; moderate to severe damage to alfalfa, barley, cotton, oats, beans, wheat, carrots, cabbage; and moderate to mild damage to corn and celery.

(over, please)

THE COST

WAYS TO FINANCE THE ANTI-POLLUTION PLAN

1. The American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), the company that owns the Tacoma smelter, made over \$110 million in profits last year. It has 353 million dollars in reserve assets. The company can afford to finance at least part of the plan. It is estimated that the entire plan would cost the smelter only 4% of its profits. This will not hurt the local economy since not much stock is held by Tacomans.
2. The smelter can raise its prices. The smelter is like a service station. It does not buy, it only refines ore. Ninety five per cent of the ore refined at the smelter is foreign ore, and sells for \$96 a ton on the foreign market. American ore sells for only \$56 a ton in the U.S. Obviously the foreign copper mines make a larger profit than the American mines, and can afford to pay more. By raising its prices the smelter will bring more money into the American economy.
3. The federal government normally offers aid to companies whose improvement costs are too high.
4. Various banks offer low interest loans to companies involved in controlling pollution. Chase Manhattan, for instance, not only offers such loans but also provides advisers and experts who can help make the process as inexpensive as possible.

HOW TO USE THE SULPHUR FOR PROFIT

The time, energy, and money ASARCO now spends in fighting needed pollution control could be used to develop ways to turn pollution control into a profitable enterprise. What to do with the sulphur only requires a little imagination.

The smelter in Trail, B.C., had a similar pollution problem. The nearby farmers forced it to stop polluting, so it converted the sulphur emissions into sulphuric acid which it then used in making fertilizer. At first the company showed a sharp drop in profits but in the long run it has made money by selling the fertilizer.

The smelter insists it is not profitable to convert the pollutants into sulphuric acid because there are no local markets for this product. But why can't they use it in making a fertilizer or some other product? Or why can't the sulphuric acid be shipped to other markets by water, the cheapest form of transportation?

It is also technically simpler to convert the pollutant into elemental sulphur, a very marketable product.

WILL THE SMELTER SHUT DOWN OR MOVE OUT?

The smelter threatens to shut down or move out if forced to comply with the pollution control standards necessary for public health. This is unlikely for the following reasons:

- The Tacoma smelter is the only deep water port smelter
- Water is the cheapest form of transportation.
- Almost all of the smelter's business comes from abroad. If ASARCO leaves Tacoma it will have to give up its foreign business.
- Electricity and taxes are cheap here.
- Smelters everywhere are running at full capacity. There is high demand for smelting services.
- The other copper smelters and other states have a sulphur removal requirement of 90%.
- It would cost \$125 million to move, more than twice the cost of the pollution control plan.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We recommend that before May 4, 1971, you should write the Washington State Pollution Control Agency in Olympia, your state representative and senator, the governor, and the Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency. According to politicians and a well known local scientist, a well worded letter with facts is worth a thousand votes. In addition to writing, phone the Pollution Control office here in Tacoma (FU 3-5851). Give the smelter a call too (759-3551).

. . . Bart Klein . . .

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