

Public Meeting
ASARCO SMELTER--ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Wednesday, May 21, 1975
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, Washington

Remarks by Mayor Gordon N. Johnston
City of Tacoma

MR. CHAIRMAN, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, MY NAME IS GORDON N. JOHNSTON, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF TACOMA. FIRSTLY, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO COMMENT ON A SUBJECT WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE CITY OF TACOMA. IT IS A SUBJECT WHICH IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF ITS EFFECT ON OUR LIFESTYLE IN TERMS OF BOTH HEALTH AND ECONOMIC WELL BEING.

AS A PART OF OUR INDUSTRIAL BASE, ASARCO'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ECONOMY OF TACOMA AND ITS ENVIRONS IS WELL UNDERSTOOD. A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF OUR CITIZENS RELY ON THEIR JOBS AT THE ASARCO PLANT FOR THEIR LIVLIHOOD. AS A PART OF THEIR CIVIC CONCERN FOR MAINTAINING THIS JOB BASE, THE ASARCO PLANT HAS MADE SUBSTANTIAL EFFORTS AND PROGRESS IN CLEANING UP THEIR EMISSIONS TO THE AIR. I HAVE A VERY HIGH REGARD FOR THESE EFFORTS MADE BY THE OPERATORS OF THE PLANT.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE AIR POLLUTION CAUSED BY THE OPERATION OF THE PLANT AND THE EFFORTS MADE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM HAVE BEEN WELL COVERED IN HEARINGS HELD BY THE PUGET SOUND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD. AS A MEMBER OF THAT BOARD, MY POSITION ON THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN WELL ESTABLISHED. FOR THAT REASON, TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT HOW WE CAN ASSIST THE CITIZENS IN COPING WITH THE PROBLEM OF CONTAMINANTS WHICH HAVE SETTLED ON THE LAND.

THE OPERATION OF THE PLANT OVER THE YEARS HAS RESULTED IN AIR BORNE CONTAMINANTS SETTLING ON THE LAND SURROUNDING THE PLANT, IN PARTICULAR ON THE AREAS DOWNWIND FROM THE PLANT. THESE CONTAMINANTS HAVE SETTLED ON BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY.

INSOFAR AS THE PUBLIC PROPERTY IS CONCERNED, THAT IS, UNPAVED STREETS, THE CITY OF TACOMA HAS ALREADY COMMENCED A PROGRAM WHICH WILL RESPOND TO CUTTING DOWN AIR BORNE CONTAMINANTS RAISED BY DUST FROM THE STREETS. THE CITY COUNCIL HAS THIS

PAST WEEK APPROVED AN INCREASE IN CITY PARTICIPATION FUNDS FOR OILING UNPAVED STREETS. THIS PROGRAM WILL GIVE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS AND PRIORITY TO THOSE STREETS WHICH ARE IN THE AREA OF POTENTIAL HEALTH HAZARDS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE STREETS IN THE VICINITY OF THE ASARCO PLANT THAT HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY THE PUGET SOUND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD AS CONTAINING HIGH LEVELS OF DANGEROUS CONTAMINANTS. BECAUSE OF THE METHOD BY WHICH OUR STREET IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS ARE ESTABLISHED WHICH REQUIRES RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PERMANENT STREETS, WE RECOGNIZE THAT OILING THE STREETS IS A SHORT TERM AND ONGOING PROGRAM WHICH THE CITY MUST BE COMMITTED TO. A LONG TERM SOLUTION WILL REQUIRE PARTICIPATION BY THE CITIZENS IN THE PROBLEM AREAS. A STRONG COMMITMENT BY GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY TO ASSIST AND ENCOURAGE THOSE RESIDENTS TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM OF PAVING THE STREETS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT.

ANOTHER AREA OF NEED IS IN REGARDS TO THE USE OF THE PRIVATE PROPERTY. THE REPORT ISSUED RECENTLY BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES ON THE DANGER OF GROWING CERTAIN KINDS OF VEGETABLES IN CONTAMINATED AREAS INDICATES A NEED FOR AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. AS A MEMBER OF THE TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY HEALTH BOARD, I WILL BE PROPOSING TO THE BOARD THAT THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT INSTITUTE A PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM WHEREIN WE CAN PROVIDE THE FULLEST AMOUNT OF INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR THE CITIZENRY TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO THE DANGERS WITHIN THE SOIL OF THEIR PROPERTIES. COOPERATION FROM OTHER AGENCIES WILL BE ESSENTIAL IN THIS EFFORT.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO REEMPHASIZE THAT THE CITY OF TACOMA HAS COMMENCED PROGRAMS TO BEGIN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF CONTAMINANTS THAT HAVE BEEN DEPOSITED OVER THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP THAT ASARCO HAS HAD WITH THE CITY AND

THAT I ENDORSE THE EFFORTS MADE AT THE REGIONAL
LEVEL TO CONTINUE THE CLEANING UP OF THE CONTAMINANTS
IN THE AIR.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS
OUR CONCERNS.