

America's Problem of Air Pollution Drawing Attention of Congress, Experts

Editor's Note: Next Tuesday is the seventh anniversary of the start of the great Donora smog which left 20 residents of the little Pennsylvania industrial town dead and thousands ill. Donora's disaster was an acute form of a chronic condition which affects most Americans. Following is a dispatch on air pollution and what is being done about it.

By JOSEPH L. MYLER
United Press Correspondent

Washington—U.P.—All Americans breathe dirty and occasionally poisonous air some of the time.

Seventy per cent of them, the residents of large city areas, breathe it most of the time.

Perhaps as many as 10,000 U. S. communities, a survey indicated today, have local air pollution problems crying for solution.

Not even the wide open spaces of rural America are exempt from "natural smog," blowing dust, forest fire smoke, ragweed pollen, and invasions of atmospheric filth from distant centers of contamination.

The dirty air most Americans breathe may contain scores of different irritants or poisons—everything from acid droplets to zinc fumes.

In one community air pollution may appear to be no more than a mild nuisance. In another it may constitute an economic calamity. It may on occasion become a killer.

Health Hazard
One thing appears certain: Contaminated air can be a health hazard. Many medical authorities are beginning to suspect strongly that it may be a major cause of lung cancer.

In any case, exclusive of its effect on the nation's physical and social well-being, dirty air is a destroyer of wealth. W. B. Gibson of the Stanford Research Institute has said the direct economic loss from air pollution may be around \$1,500,000,000 a year.

Dr. Louise C. McCabe, nationally known air pollution authority recently drafted by the Public Health Service, has listed some of the costs of air pollution as follows:

Depreciation of land and buildings including the slum-breeding creeping blight known as "downtown decay"—\$300,000,000.

Crop and forest and domestic animal losses—\$30,000,000.

Cost of municipal and state programs—\$10,000,000.

Equipment installed to control air pollution—\$150,000,000.

Damage to merchandise \$300,000,000.

Is anything being done to make the air clean as well as free? Individual communities

and industries have been fighting against dirty air for years.

But for only about a year and a half has the federal government been doing much of anything about what has become both an international (as in the Detroit-Windsor area) and interstate (New York-New Jersey) as well as local (Donora, Pa., and Los Angeles) health and economic problem.

And only last summer did Congress authorize the Public Health Service to undertake a five-year research campaign to find out (1) just what air pollution is, (2) just what it does, and (3) how best to combat it. For the first year of the campaign Congress appropriated \$1,780,000.

How long will it be before the campaign produces major

results? Many, many years. Research on the chronic effects of air pollution on human beings and animals alone will take more than five years, according to the government.

Air pollution is as old as nature. Pliny the Elder was killed by poisonous air in 8 A.D. during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Man-caused air pollution is the big menace to modern populations, however. Ever since the industrial revolution got under way in the 18th century man has been pouring billions of tons of waste gas, smoke, dust and chemicals into the atmosphere. It has been estimated that factory chimneys each year vent 6,000,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide alone. The rise of the motor car with its exhaust fumes

and of the chemical industry has added incalculably to contamination of the once-safe air.

Smog Disasters

It took the great smog disasters of the 20th century to awaken authorities to the health hazards of dirty air. In 1930 a heavy fog enveloped the highly industrialized Meuse Valley of Belgium. The toll: 60 dead.

Seven years ago on Oct. 27, 1948, a similar fog rolled over Donora, Pa., an industrial town of 12,300 population and sat there for six days. Twenty died, perhaps as many as 6000 fell ill.

In December, 1952, London, which had been struggling with smog for six centuries, had its worst blackout. It lasted four days. In the following two weeks some 4000 persons died before

their time as a result.

Smog chronically afflicts Los Angeles where "objectionable conditions" exist 100 days out of the 365. Warm air from the Pacific often is trapped over Los Angeles by high mountains east of the city.

Gov. Goodwin J. Knight once asked Mark D. Hollis, chief sanitary engineer of the Public Health Service, if removing one of the barrier mountains would help Los Angeles rid itself of smog.

It would help, all right, but could it be done? Who's to say what Los Angeles can do?

A city that went across hundreds of miles of deserts and mountains to tap the Colorado river for water might be capable of even greater marvels to get itself a supply of clean air.

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Berkeley Scientists Prove Existence Of Never-Before Isolated Anti-Protons

Washington—(U.P.)—Atomic researchers have proved the existence of anti-protons, particles of matter long believed theoretically to exist but never before isolated.

Scientists captured the "nuclear ghost" at the Atomic Energy commission's radiation laboratory at the University of California at Berkeley. They did so with the university's \$9,500,000 bevatron, the world's most powerful atom smasher, in what was called "one of the classical experiments of nuclear physics."

The anti-proton is the negative version of a proton, one of the fundamental particles of an atom's nucleus. It is of the same mass as the proton but of a different charge.

The AEC said the anti-proton is "born" outside an atom's nucleus following some "high energy nuclear event."

Reinforces Theory
"The discovery does not modify the model of the atomic nucleus," the AEC said. "Rather it reinforces and solidifies current theory. This elimination of un-

certainty about one of the cornerstones of nuclear theory is one of the discovery's most valuable features."

Until the bevatron was built, there was no way to create a nuclear bombardment of sufficient energy to capture the elusive "ghost."

The Berkeley scientists used the bevatron to accelerate pro-

tons to 6.2 billion electron volts. The protons then were aimed at a copper target inside the bevatron chamber.

When the protons crashed into one of the copper atoms, there was created a "brand new set of heavy particles, a proton and an anti-proton." The scientists isolated the anti-protons by setting up a "maze" through which

only they could pass.

The AEC said the anti-proton is stable only in a vacuum.

Observed Only

So far scientists have been able to observe the anti-protons only by radiation counters but efforts are being made to obtain photographs of them in photo emulsions, the AEC said.

Announcement of the anti-proton was made simultaneously here and in Berkeley yesterday. Dr. Ernest O. Lawrence, Nobel Prize winner and director of the UC radiation laboratory, credited four of his associates with the discovery:

Dr. Emilio Segre, 50, a native of Italy; Dr. Owen Chamberlain, 35, a native of San Francisco; Dr. Clyde E. Wiegand, 40, in Oakland; and Dr. Thomas Ypsilantis, 27, formerly of Salt Lake City.

Dr. Willard F. Libby, acting chairman of the AEC, wired the four men congratulations, saying the discovery was "valuable in man's effort to control and use his physical environment."

Housefly Said One of Greatest Disease Carriers

St. Paul, Minn.—(U.P.)—Never underestimate the power of the housefly, the Minnesota State Medical Association said. It is one of the greatest disease-carriers in history.

"Screening and insecticides have helped reduce the menace," the association said, "but good sanitation is the one weapon against which flies cannot develop resistance. One careless person can be the source of enough flies to annoy everyone on the block. The best method of controlling flies is to eliminate places where they lay their eggs."

Costly Railroad Bridge Never Put To Use

Portage, Wis.—(U.P.)—There is a lift bridge over a government canal for the Milwaukee Railroad tracks here that has cost the company nearly \$100,000 since 1938 but has never been opened.

The bridge was constructed in 1938 at a cost of \$72,470 plus 22,725 for additional work all because the canal was called a navigable stream between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. It was built by order of the government's Corps of Engineers. Railroad officials say there are no plans for removal of the structure.

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