

EA's Clean Air Act campaign spoiled

The recent passage of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1970 (HR 17255) by the House of Representatives offers a good lesson for environmentalists on how a potentially meaningful piece of legislation can be legislated into impotency. Environmental Action coordinated an extensive citizens' lobby to offer amendments from the floor which would strengthen the section of the bill dealing with auto emissions, but the attempt was foiled when the bill was presented to Congress a full week earlier than anticipated.

Carl Albert, House majority leader, used the Clean Air Act Amendments to fill a gap in the House Calendar that was suddenly created the day before. Originally the bill was scheduled to be brought to the floor no earlier than June 10. Environmental Action was informed that the vote had been moved to June 3 less than 24 hours before the vote took place.

Members of the Interstate Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Health, who prepared the bill, were anxious for the chance to snap the bill through Congress without adding any amendments. Very few congressmen had a chance to read the bill, since it wasn't printed until the morning of the vote. Level of debate on the floor was exceedingly low. Paul

Rogers (Florida) and Harley Stagers (West Virginia) are the committee members who cleared the path for the bill's passage.

Even fewer congressmen had a chance to read the prepared informational packet which the citizens' lobby had planned to distribute. The environmentalists meant to give this packet to each congressman personally, answer his questions about the amendments, and offer him further information.

The packet was meant to be an educational tool, as well as a statement of opinion on behalf of Environmental Action and the endorsing conservation and union constituent groups. Washington chapter members of Zero Population Growth, Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth all planned to participate in the campaign to inform congressmen of the need for a stronger bill. Endorsements ranged from Black Survival and Environment! to Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union.

A press conference was scheduled on June 10 to announce the beginning of an all-out campaign to demand strict air pollution legislation, specifically, the four amendments dealing with the auto emissions section of the bill. Since the conference was held on the same day as the

vote, EA's press statement also included a denouncement of a system which allows legislation to be voted on without first being studied—a system which does not allow constituents to present opinion and information.

The four amendments defeated in the House were originally proposed by Congressman Leonard Farbstein from Manhattan. The amendments dealt with the internal combustion engine which is responsible for 60-92 per cent of all air pollution. The first amendment called for California emissions standards as nationwide minimums. This amendment insured that the current technology on the production line would be made available to all other states as well.

Another amendment authorized the National Air Pollution Control Administration (NAPCA) to conduct voluntary emissions tests for automobiles which have been driven over four thousand miles. Pollution devices which consistently fail to meet HEW standards would be recalled and replaced by automotive manufacturers.

A third amendment dealt with fuel composition. Even though this proposal was offered by the administration, the committee removed it from the final version of the bill. The amendment permits NAPCA both to regulate fuel additives, and to require from industry the research necessary to determine the presence or absence of health hazards in fuel mixes.

A fourth proposed amendment would have served notice to the auto industry that further progress in emissions control after 1975 is imperative. It provided for gradual adoption of emission standards based on the most pollution free propulsion system available rather than on the internal combustion engine.

Preparation is now under way to strengthen a similar bill in the Senate. If improvements are not made in the Senate version of the bill, Environmental Action and other constituent groups will again promote amendments on the floor. This time the citizens' lobby will deal with the stationary emissions section of the bill as well as the auto emissions section.

The progress which results from legislation which offers weak standards and no method of enforcement can hardly be termed progress. EA urges you to inform your senator that you back a strong bill or no bill at all concerning the piece of air pollution legislation which will reach the Senate floor sometime in early July.

Free air time for auto spots

Despite the internal combustion engine's being called a killer by anti-pollution forces, the Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB) is encouraging stations to give free time for spots urging Americans to buy more cars.

RAB is not suggesting that stations log the free spots as public service time, but it is waging the campaign because it feels boosting car sales is in the public interest. One out of six Americans, says RAB President Miles Davis, rely on auto-related industries that supply raw materials, parts, and services to the industry. That also includes ad agencies and radio stations because automakers are usually big advertisers.

This year has not been a good one for Detroit. Sales are off, production has been periodically halted, and the industry has been identified as a major polluter. RAB's Detroit office thought an ad campaign would be a shot in the arm.

The series is a revival of the 1958 "You Auto Buy Now" campaign. A typical commercial in the current effort includes a mature male voice asking, "Have

you blinked your eyes and a year went by, or maybe two? It happens to all of us. And when you look again, things have changed...like the new cars. Sure your old one still gets you there, but look what you're missing..." There are 21 commercials of varying lengths, each playing up one of four themes: there are new features in new models; maintenance costs are lower for new cars; there is a certain romance in owning a new car for the coming vacation season; and bargain prices are available due to the over supply.

The campaign is expected to last nine more weeks, but is really open-ended. A spokesman for RAB said his office has only received one complaint from ecologists complaining about the ads. The group was told that new cars contribute less to pollution than older models. That may not be enough to satisfy the ecology movement campaigning against foul air, junked cars, and unnecessary over-consumption. Ecologists should demand equal time against this threat to the environment.