

PUBLIC HEALTH

Clear Los Angeles Smog

The techniques for dealing with the Los Angeles smog are now available, and scientists close to the problem urge less talk and more action.

► THE KNOW-HOW to deal with Los Angeles smog problem is already available. Residents and officials of Los Angeles county should stop talking and start acting. That is the only way to get rid of future smog blankets, with their now-unknown effects on the health of millions of people.

These are the conclusions of scientists who have been working closely on the problem. In private discussions, the scientists said they are "extremely worried" about the smog's effects, from traffic and airplane accidents to health.

The problem is made more "difficult" because politics are involved. Not only are local, state and federal governments concerned, but during the election campaign, charges and counter-charges were being hurled at each other by Republicans and Democrats.

Added to the political struggles is the fact there seem to be "seventeen" different research groups" making studies of smog. Sometimes the results of their research will differ only in detail, yet this will give some an excuse to say the work should be repeated, the scientists charged.

There is already "lots of scientific know-how" available to deal with the problem, they said, but "you do not get results if research is an end in itself. The various committees now seem only to be measuring and making long-range programs."

Start closing something down now, even while making such measurements and planning such programs, is their advice. This may seem expensive now, but if costs of the especially needed equipment are amortized over several years, in some case as many as 30, the total expenditure would be only \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000 a year.

This sum, the scientists pointed out, is not much more than is being spent annually for research on the smog problem.

It almost looks, one scientist said, "as if the Los Angeles people really do not want to do much" about smog. Another pointed out that "everyone blames everyone else. No one wants to be the first to stop spewing for the fumes."

The three most serious smog sources are the oil refineries and other industries, auto fumes and back yard incinerators.

Rather than forming committees "to bother authorities who are already working on the problem or research groups to act as supra-bodies over others already established," the next step is to pinpoint the responsibility for smog-causing particles, and determine which of the sources is the worst offender.

It takes nearly two years for a new scientific group to become really familiar with

the smog problem, the scientists said. So instead of waiting for results of research just now being launched, they urged "immediate" use of knowledge already at hand, which is "sufficient to do the job."

The only way to start the attack on smog, they said, is to begin now, instead of everyone saying "let's do something about it but do it later."

One thing that can be done about the smog problem immediately, besides pinpointing smog sources, these scientists point out, is to plan for the future. New industries going up should be so located and designed that they do not contribute to air pollution.

Even though the scientific techniques for placing the blame for air pollution causes were not available a year ago, they can be used now.

In a sense, the scientists said, everyone living in Los Angeles county is responsible for the smog. They suggested that perhaps Los Angeles residents really do not want to find out exactly what sources spew forth

how much air-polluting material. If they do not find out, then "no action need be taken," and the future, when the smog problem will be increasingly serious, can be conveniently forgotten.

Devices to clean up fumes pouring forth from factories, refineries, autos and incinerators that are only 70% or less efficient will eventually result in air so polluted that it will kill Los Angeles residents, the scientists warned.

If the present expansion rate of industry doubling itself every five years is continued, the smog problem will continue to become more serious at a rate that accelerates greatly with time.

Science News Letter, December 11, 1954

ENGINEERING

"Venetian Blind" Idea Used in New Lathhouse

► THE "VENETIAN blind" principle, used on the roof of a lathhouse, has produced a new type of structure for floriculture studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Constructed of aluminum strips, the structure has double sliding roof sections that afford precise regulation of light and shade. Each section is controlled by pull cords so that sunlight can be regulated separately for each given inside area of the lathhouse.

Science News Letter, December 11, 1954



"HOT" LAUNDRY WASTE—Richard Ebreinreich of New York University is shown here evaporating samples from radioactive wastes that have been treated in a special trickling filter plant. The plant is used for removal of radioactivity from wastes remaining after workmen's clothes have been laundered.