

State Smog Conference Backs Regional Control

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 21 (AP) — A California conference on air pollution control voted four to one today for regional organization to combat the smog problem.

Conference delegates approved, by a 133 to 31 vote, regional administration with regional boundaries following natural atmospheric basins.

Law Revision

The balloting on procedures for battling air pollution followed conference sessions addressed by Gov. Knight and Dr. Edward R. Weidlein of Pittsburgh, Pa., president of the Mellon Institute.

Knight declared air pollution control is a local and not State responsibility.

The conference, called by the State Chamber of Commerce favored, 138 to 23, developing pollution control law

revision by a citizens group representing all affected interests.

Dr. Weidlein advocated this method. He reported Pittsburgh had overcome a great pollution problem with industry spending \$200,000,000 in Alleghany County to conform to control ordinances.

Members cast 82 votes for combined State and local financing of smog control administration. Seventy-seven voted for strictly local financing and seven for strictly State financing.

By a 131-23 vote, the conference backed organization of a committee to study and recommend means for coordinating public and private air pollution research.

A 136-26 vote favored legislative appropriation of "substantial funds" for research

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WAR ON SMOG

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by existing agencies on causes and nature of air pollution.

A 130-28 majority voted that nuisance abatement actions should be based on scientific determination of harmful pollution.

A 145-10 vote approved administrative determination of pollution materials to be controlled by the regional authority rather than by State legislation.

Tax Write-offs

Federal and State tax write-offs to encourage installation of air pollution control equipment were favored, 136-22.

Weidlein, a smog authority, said industry alone spent more than \$200,000,000 in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to conform to the smoke control ordinances.

As result, "smogs that once blackened the city are gone. Cleaner living conditions have saved city residents an estimated \$27,000,000 annually.

One of the greatest unanswered questions about smog, Knight said, is whether it is a killer and whether it has long-range harmful effects on the health of those who daily breathe it.

Giving a preview of an intensive State Public Health Department probe into this question, Knight declared:

"In all honesty, that question still can not be answered.

"The report presents no evidence of serious adverse effect on health to date but states that present scientific evidence is insufficient to estimate how near air pollution in California has approached disaster levels."

Repeats Stand

But while this aspect is still being investigated, the Governor said, control activities need not be held up.

Ideally, he said, there should be regional pollution control agencies because smog is no respecter of county lines. Present laws need tightening for this kind of organization, he said.

The State's role, he declared, is to help determine "the precise nature and extent of air pollution and to provide the necessary machinery for enactment of control measures."

Knight spoke out against one legislative proposal to es-

tablish local smog control by empowering boards of supervisors to select five-member commissions, whose members would thereafter be elective.

This approach, he said, would "inevitably result in the bitterest kind of political activity," at the expense of the suffering public.

S.F. Polluted Air

Large clouds of polluted air from the San Francisco Bay area have been observed pouring down through the San Joaquin Valley and have gone as far as the Mojave Desert, Dr. Lauren B. Hitchcock, president and managing director of the Air Pollution Foundation of Los Angeles, told the conference.

State plant pathologists found smog damage to plants in Berkeley as early as 1950 and by last year it had spread eastward as far as Walnut Creek, southward to Gilroy and northward to San Rafael, Hitchcock asserted.

The situation in the Bay area now is something like that in Los Angeles five years ago, he said. He urged that the Bay area utilize knowledge built up in Los Angeles and elsewhere to start an air pollution control program.

Speakers today included Arthur J. Will, chief administrative officer of Los Angeles County, who reported that smog-creating exhausts from oil refineries have been reduced by three-fourths in the last four years; Dr. A. R. Zarem, manager of Stanford Research Institute's Los Angeles division, and P. S. Magruder, Los Angeles petroleum executive.



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