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The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Still Cleaner Air

ENVIRONMENTAL legislation has proved to be the great exception over the past decade to Americans' exasperation with their government. Elsewhere they have demanded less regulation and fewer intrusions. But the defense of the environmental laws remained consistently solid through the Age of Reagan, and now Congress is collaborating with President Bush to tighten and extend the Clean Air Act. The present clean air rules are expensive, costing Americans some \$30 billion a year, and the bill now moving through Congress will add (as far as anyone can calculate it) more than \$20 billion to that. But despite the vociferous resistance to taxes for other purposes, public support for the new clean air requirements remains strikingly broad and durable.

The House version of the bill, passed last week, is similar to the Senate's earlier one. The conference will doubtless be a lively affair, but the general outline of the legislation is now established. It will launch two important innovations.

To reduce acid rain, it will create a market in pollution rights among the big power plants that are the chief source of it. That will give even the cleanest of plants an economic incentive to get cleaner and, by selling the pollution rights that they don't need, permit industrial development within a national pollution quota that remains unchanged.

As for automobiles, the manufacturers for 20 years have borne most of the responsibility for the technology to clean up exhaust emissions and

reduce smog. More of that responsibility will now shift to the companies that sell fuel. There are cleaner fuels than the gasoline most cars now use. Ideally, the legislation would only press for a higher standard and remain neutral among the various alternatives. In fact, it appears to be tilted toward ethanol—a tribute to the influence of the corn growers and the companies that use corn to make ethanol. The advantages of adding ethanol to gasoline are questionable and limited to winter weather. It would be dangerous to let the farm lobby run away with this one.

The emerging legislation is generally conservative, in the sense that it addresses concerns that have been before Congress for many years and, with these few exceptions, addresses them in familiar ways. While the bill pushes for cleaner automobile fuel, it doesn't ask whether the country is not consuming too much fuel for its own health. The bill will certainly mean cleaner smoke from coal-burning power plants, but it doesn't ask whether burning coal in the present volumes won't inevitably damage the atmosphere.

This year's Clean Air Act addresses an economy that runs almost entirely on fossil fuel, sending gigantic amounts of carbon dioxide into the air and threatening to change the climate. Neither Mr. Bush nor Congress have had anything to say about that so far except, "Not yet." But that's the next question, and the United States is now engaged in international negotiations that will require it to make up its mind on carbon dioxide and global warming by the end of the year.

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

Cleaner gas key to clean air bill

By Richard L. Berke

New York Times

WASHINGTON — House negotiators said Sunday that they had reached agreement on an amendment to a clean air bill that would require service stations and their suppliers in nine of the most polluted urban areas to sell cleaner-burning gasoline beginning in 1994.

The provision was the target of an unusually vigorous national advertising campaign by the oil industry and by automobile manufacturers.

In the last three weeks alone, the American Petroleum Institute spent more than \$1 million on newspaper advertisements featuring a gasoline can and a warning that the measure "won't cure the smog problem," but "will cost you more."

Gasoline companies in the nine areas would have to sell new mixes of fuel that would replace toxic compounds with cleaner-burning additives, like grain-based ethanol. The areas are Philadelphia, San Diego and seven areas that cover most of Connecticut.

The oil industry, fearful that the amendment would drive up costs and increase competition from manufacturers of alternative-fuel, vigorously opposed the measure, leading to a 22-to-21 defeat last month in the

House Energy and Commerce Committee.

But in long negotiations over the weekend, committee members allied with environmental groups joined members from farm states that produce ethanol and pushed through the compromise.

Committee officials say the provision will become part of the overall clean air bill that is scheduled to reach the House floor this week.

Debate on the bill is scheduled to begin today, but key lawmakers and their staffs, seeking to avoid floor fights, met through most of the weekend to work out differences on some of the proposed amendments.

By late Sunday night, negotiators also tentatively had agreed on amendments to tighten the permit procedures and expand the enforcement authority under the Clean Air Act.

"Despite 'Big Oil's' opposition, we reached agreement on a major environmental initiative that will not only clean up the nation's air, but give credibility to the growing ethanol industry," said Rep. William Richardson, D-N.M., who sponsored the clean fuels amendment with Rep. Edward Madigan, R-Ill.

"They've been carpet-bombing my

state," he went on, referring to the ad campaign. "It's obscene the disinformation and inaccuracies that have been put out about my amendment."

Lobbying against the measure has been led by the American Petroleum Institute, where a spokesman, R.G. Enszt, confirmed that the advertising drive had cost more than \$1 million.

Criticizing the amendment, Enszt said:

"The agreement apparently still contains a specific chemical formula for gasoline and we believe this would be counterproductive. Congress, instead of writing specific formulas, should set tough and enforceable air quality goals and then let petroleum chemists and automotive engineers figure out how to best meet these goals."

The clean air bill that passed the Senate last month contains a similar amendment on reformulated fuels.

The original House version had tighter provisions, calling for companies to sell the reformulated fuel in 27 areas. The compromise retained a provision that other cities can independently decide to participate in the program.

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WSJ

9/24/98

Compromise Struck to Let In More Skilled Workers

By GREG HITT

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—The White House and key GOP leaders neared agreement on a top Silicon Valley priority, legislation that would increase the number of highly skilled foreign workers entering the U.S.

With President Clinton traveling Friday to California for a political fund-raiser sponsored by venture capitalist John Doerr, a proponent of the legislation, top White House aides worked furiously to resolve an issue that has strained relations with the high-tech community. The hope is to find a compromise that could be brought to the House floor as early as today, White House and congressional aides said.

But the timing for action could slip as GOP leaders juggle the end-of-session legislative calendar.

"That's the goal," said Sen. Spencer Abraham (R., Mich.), who has held a series of meetings in recent days with Gene Sperling, a top Clinton economic official.

Added Rep. Lamar Smith (R., Texas): "We're awfully close."

The controversy has forced the White House to weigh the interests of the business community against organized labor. The same sort of trade-off is at the heart of debate in the House over whether to give the president fast-track negotiating authority on trade issues. That issue is scheduled for a vote Friday or Saturday, and the prospects for passage are poor.

Last year, the House GOP leadership, in consultation with the White House, pulled the fast-track bill from the floor rather than see it go down in defeat. The concern then was that U.S. credibility abroad could be damaged by such a fiasco.

But House Majority Leader Richard Armey (R., Texas) said there will be no turning back this time. "We don't see that view now," Mr. Armey said. He emphasized the leadership's intention to move ahead despite the bill's apparently shaky

support: "We are now thinking it is more important that we telegraph to the world that America is willing to take, as it were, minimal risks in order to move this forward," he said.

The GOP leadership has pushed ahead with fast track over Democratic objections that the move—coming so close to the November election—represents a crass attempt to heighten tensions between the Democrats and organized labor. Union leaders have traditionally argued that free-trade agreements ignore unfair labor practices in low-wage countries.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, in a letter circulated on Capitol Hill, accused Republican leaders of scheduling "a vote on fast-track legislation for the primary purpose of creating political chaos so close to the midterm elections."

Support among Democrats, by all accounts, appears to have eroded significantly since last year. Perhaps as few as 25 Democrats are now prepared to back fast track, far below the 40 to 44 Democratic supporters counted in the last go-round. That means GOP leaders will have to scrounge up even more support from their side of the aisle, no easy task.

Rep. Bob Matsui (D., Calif.) said failure of the bill would have long-term ramifications. "It will demonstrate, in this country, that we have lost our bipartisan consensus on the whole issue of trade," said Mr. Matsui, a leading supporter of fast track in previous years. He is resisting the GOP effort this fall. "This vote will be seen not as a pure-trade vote, but as a vote about whether the United States is engaged internationally."

GOP leaders are looking for fresh support from the Florida delegation, where the impact of trade on the agriculture community is paramount. They have tried to draft language that would address those concerns. Ultimately, the party hopes to deliver as many as 180 Republicans and are

banking on Democrats to provide the final margin for passage at roll call.

"Whip counts just aren't going to mean a lot until the clock is actually running," said a top GOP House aide, acknowledging there's no guarantee of success. "If it fails, it's bad for the country from a policy standpoint, but it's still good for us as a party. We're making it clear the Republican Party is the party of growth, the economy and expanding markets."

On the immigration issue, the outlook is much brighter. The White House wants to support the measure; it is looking for a greater commitment to train U.S. workers and assurances that U.S. workers won't be displaced. The underlying legislation would increase the number of so-called H-1B visas, which allow skilled workers into the country for three years, to 115,000 by 2002 from this year's limit of 65,000.

The high-tech industry argues that a lack of such workers is crimping its growth. "It's very important that we not be inhibited," said Roger Coker, a personnel executive at Texas Instruments Inc., a computer-chip maker.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Debate on clean-air bill hinges on alternative fuels

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The House began debating the clean air bill Monday, divided over alternative-fuel cars and efforts to toughen anti-smog language, plus a dispute over unemployment aid to workers caught in the anti-pollution campaign.

As consideration began, backroom negotiations were held in hopes of settling the relatively few unresolved issues and keeping the bill on track to passage this week.

Congress has not been able to pass tougher clean air legislation for 13 years.

Most attention was focused on a plan to require mass production of cars that can run on cleaner-burning fuels, such as grain-based ethanol or natural gas.

Over the weekend, negotiators reached agreement on scaled-down

language to require oil companies to produce less-polluting gasolines for sale in the nation's nine smoggiest areas. Initial proposals would have covered 27 cities.

The new "reformulated" gasolines, which has 15 percent lower levels of smog-causing contaminants, would be required in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Baltimore, Milwaukee and the Hartford-New Haven area in Connecticut. It also would be sold in 44 cities with excessive carbon monoxide levels.

The petroleum industry strongly opposes the reformulated gasoline requirement, saying it could boost the cost of gasoline by up to 15 cents per gallon. Farm groups back the plan because it would boost the market for corn, used to make ethanol.

Overall, the bill aims to cut in half acid rain pollution from power

plants, impose limits on some 170 toxic or cancer-causing industrial emissions, and reduce smog-causing releases from factories and automobiles.

A similar bill was passed by the Senate last month. Sponsors of the Senate bill said it will require \$21 billion a year in additional pollution controls, but business lobbyists put the cost twice as high.

Once the House version is finished, negotiators will have to work out the differences in a conference committee, then return the measure to both the House and Senate for final passage.

The House debate is expected to be relatively quiet and quick because the most controversial issues were settled during consideration by the Energy and Commerce Committee.

"All of the really important environmental issues have been disposed of," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich.,

chairman of the committee and prime sponsor of the bill.

Both Dingell and Rep. Norman Lent, R-N.Y., the primary Republican sponsor of the bill, said they would oppose changes in the committee compromises.

Negotiators were working to reach compromises on alternative-fuel cars and other potentially controversial amendments, including:

- Phasing out the use of chlorofluorocarbons, halons and other ozone-depleting industrial chemicals by July 1997.

- Providing special unemployment assistance to workers who lose their jobs due to increased emission control costs. The Senate rejected a costly jobless aid plan geared to helping coal miners.

- Reduce utility emissions that contribute to haze in national parks.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

House Approves Clean Air Bill

By 401-21 Vote, Measure Goes to Conference

By Michael Weisskopf
Washington Post Staff Writer

The House last night approved major revisions to the nation's air pollution laws, bridging longstanding political differences and tightening controls on industry in the hope of scrubbing the skies clean by early next century.

The legislation, passed 401 to 21, seeks to halt acid rain by requiring utilities to halve their sulfur emissions within a decade; to combat urban smog with cleaner gasoline and tougher controls on automobiles; to protect industrial communities from toxic releases of nearby plants, and to phase out ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by the year 2000.

The bill shares the broad goals of the Senate measure passed April 3, but the methods and deadlines for meeting those objectives vary significantly, all but assuring a contentious House-Senate conference.

The measure, however, risks a possible presidential veto because of its \$250 million package of relief measures for workers who lose their jobs from industry's efforts to reduce emissions. High-sulfur coal workers in the Midwest and Appalachia would be the hardest hit as companies burn low-sulfur coal mined elsewhere.

Unlike the Senate, the House worked out its measure with an un-



REP. JOHN D. DINGELL
... helped forge compromise

usual degree of cooperation. While the Senate had its bill on the floor for two months, half of which was consumed by negotiations with the Bush administration, the House reported its measure after only 12 hours of debate yesterday.

The spirit of compromise was symbolized last night by the last-minute agreement on ultra-clean cars by traditionally bitter political rivals—

See AIR, A8, Col. 3

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

■ *Senate backs partial ban on semiautomatic assault weapons. Page A4*

Nursing Home Problems Cited In U.S. Guide

Associated Press

More than one-third of the nation's skilled-care nursing homes failed to meet standards for clean food and nearly one-quarter did not administer drugs properly, the government's latest consumer guide said today.

A majority of the measurements of nursing home quality in the 93-volume guide, compiling information from surprise inspections of nursing homes in 1988 and 1989, did not change or improve from the previous report.

But the survey found that the number of homes not meeting federal standards for two areas—proper care for injections, tube feeding and other procedures; and providing meaningful resident activities—rose significantly from the 1987-88 report. In each case, the rise was less than 4 points.

The massive report, the second in a planned annual series, measures the performance in 32 cate-

gories of more than 15,000 nursing homes that have Medicare or Medicaid patients.

"This is not the definitive guide to nursing home selection," cautioned Gail R. Wilensky, head of the Health Care Financing Administration, which handles the Medicare and Medicaid programs. "This is a snapshot at a point in time."

The guide provides basic information that consumers should use to ask questions of nursing home operators before selecting a home, she said.

Wilensky said the new report shows general improvement since the 1987-88 survey, but "we are doing much better on some areas than we are doing on others."

"In general it appears that there are fewer examples of nursing homes not meeting these criteria than occurred in 1987-88." But some in the industry called the documents incomplete and misleading.

Paul Willging of the American Health Care Association, which represents 10,000 nursing homes, said the guide is "not reliable. In fact, the guide could be harmful to consumers who use it as a shortcut to selecting a nursing home."

Overall, the failure rate exceeded 15 percent in nine categories for the homes that provide skilled care.

House Approves Clean Air Legislation

AIR, From A1

Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), from the center of U.S. automakers in the Detroit area, and Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), from the nation's smoggiest city, Los Angeles.

Dingell, chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee that marked up the bill, and Waxman, the House's leading clean-air advocate, put aside their differences to reach compromises on auto pollution. They also brokered agreements on the regionally divisive acid rain issue, helping to find common ground among representatives of dirty utilities in the Midwest and Appalachia, clean plants in the West, and the forests and lakes ravaged by acid rain in New England.

"The president led, the public wanted it and the House responded," Dingell said, explaining the ease with which the House passed its first clean air bill in 13 years.

With most major provisions worked out in committee, yesterday's vote was almost anticlimactic. Like the Senate measure, the compromises were delicately crafted to

reflect the interests of key legislators in each chamber—interests that may clash when the bills intersect in conference.

Then a presidential veto looms because of a provision to extend an extra six months of unemployment benefits to workers who can show the new air pollution laws were an "important contributing factor" to their job loss. The White House said it fears a "potentially open-ended liability" that could have "massive budget implications" if it becomes a precedent for workers affected by other environmental laws.

The acid rain provisions would require the greatest reductions in emissions at 107 of the nation's dirtiest power plants in the Midwest and Appalachia.

Both bills use a market-based system to ease the costs to those utilities, with every unit given pollution limits. For every ton cut below the limit, plants would receive two emission credits saleable to facilities seeking to expand—a potential source of cash for dirty plants.

The funds could then be used to buy technology enabling the dirty

plants to continue burning high-sulfur coal mined in the Midwest and Appalachia, thus saving jobs.

But each bill has a different formula for creating the extra credits without breaking the nationwide emissions cap or penalizing plants in the West and Southwest that are already so clean they cannot cut emissions to earn the right to grow.

The formula worked out in the House is more favorable to Midwestern and Appalachian concerns than the version passed by the Senate, where lawmakers from "clean" states in the West have more power.

The anti-smog provisions in both bills target the automobile for pollution cutbacks, the first tightening of tailpipe standards in 20 years. Each measure calls for a 39 percent reduction in hydrocarbons and 60 percent for nitrogen oxides—the two ingredients of smog. Each calls for controls to start in the mid-1990s.

But the two houses differ in implementation of a second phase of tailpipe cutbacks—another 50 percent cut in each pollutant—which environmentalists say should be mandatory to compensate for the

explosion in the number of autos projected for the next century.

In the House bill, the second phase would be contingent on a study by the Environmental Protection Agency to determine its need, feasibility and cost effectiveness.

The Senate bill provides an automatic trigger. The tighter standards would be required in 2004 if 12 of the 27 cities now classified as "seriously" polluted still have excessive levels of smog by the year 2000.

Both bills provide for a new weapon in the war against smog—"reformulated gasoline," gas containing additives that make it less polluting. It would fuel cars in the nine smoggiest cities by 1994.

But while the Senate measure calls for a 15 percent decrease in the smog-forming byproducts of gasoline, the House would require cuts of 25 percent phased in over 10 years.

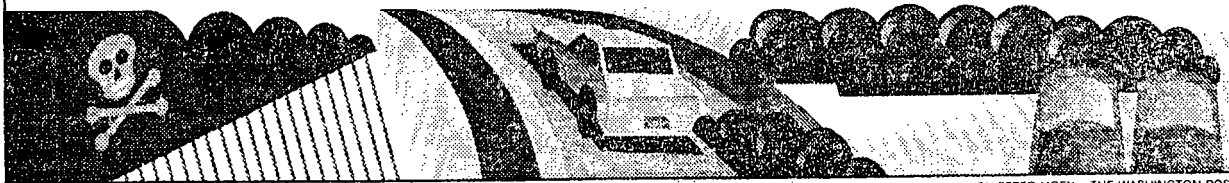
The compromise bill calls for the sale in California of 300,000 cars per year by 1997 that can run on fuels 50 percent cleaner than conventional gasoline, such as ethanol or electricity. Public buses and cen-

See AIR, A9, Col. 1

COMPARING VERSIONS OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT

	Current Law	Senate Bill	House Bill
Tailpipe emissions			
Nitrogen Oxide	1.0 grams per mile (gpm)	0.4 gpm by 1995; 0.2 gpm by Oct. 1, 2003, if 12 of 27 "seriously" polluted cities remain smoggy.	0.4 gpm by 1996; 0.2 gpm by 2003 if EPA deems it "feasible and necessary."
Hydrocarbons	.41 gpm	0.25 gpm by 1995; 0.125 by Oct. 1, 2003, if 12 of 27 "seriously" polluted cities remain smoggy.	0.25 gpm by 1996; 0.125 gpm by 2003 if EPA deems it "feasible and necessary."
Alternative fuels	No current law	Requires a reformulated gasoline mixture for all new cars in the nation's nine smoggiest cities by 1995, capable of reducing ozone-forming pollutants by 15%. Also requires "super-clean fuels" for federal and private fleets in the nine smoggiest cities by 1997.	Requires a reformulated gasoline for all new cars in the nation's nine smoggiest cities by 1995, capable of reducing ozone-forming pollutants by 15%. By the year 2000 the pollutants must be reduced by 25%.
Toxic industrial emissions	Toxic emissions are controlled to "protect the public health with an ample margin of safety." Seven pollutants have been regulated in 20 years.	Requires industry to install "best available technology" by 2000 to control sources of 200 toxic substances. Congress to set standards for residual risk of carcinogens with goal of no more than 1 in 10,000 odds of causing cancer.	Requires industry to install "best available technology" by 2000 to control sources of 200 toxic substances. EPA to limit residual risk with "ample margin of safety," as in current law.
Acid rain	No current law	Calls for 50% cut in emissions of sulfur dioxide by the year 2000 and caps them at that level. Uses system of credits to ease burden on dirty utilities, compensate miners for job loss and help fast-growing states.	Same environmental goals as Senate bill. Uses system of credits, tight controls on Department of Energy plants and annual auctions to ease burden on dirty utilities, compensate miners for job loss and help fast-growing states.
Industrial sources of smog	Requires technological controls for plants emitting more than 100 tons per year.	Retains current law, except for Los Angeles, where it would be reduced to 50 tons.	Requires technological controls for plants emitting 50 tons per year in 27 "serious" smog areas, including Washington; 25 tons per year in "severe" areas, including New York and Baltimore; 10 tons per year in Los Angeles.

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Clean Air Bill Overwhelmingly Passed in House

AIR, From A8

trally fueled fleets of government and commercial vehicles would have to run on ultraclean fuels in the 27 smoggiest cities.

For the first time, under the legislation, small industrial emitters of ozone-forming substances, including printing plants and dry cleaners, may be required to install technology to control their pollution.

The House bill would require

control devices for plants emitting as little as 10 tons per year in Los Angeles and 25 tons per year in such "severely" polluted areas as Baltimore, New York and Houston. Now the only plants that are regulated discharge more than 100 tons per year.

The Senate would retain the current threshold everywhere but Los Angeles, where it would be reduced to 50 tons per year.

Both bills attempt to curb emis-

sions of toxic substances by industry, chiefly oil refineries and petrochemical manufacturers. Those airborne toxics have all but escaped regulation in the past 20 years, exposing communities to high risks of cancer and other disease.

The two-stage remedy is similar in both bills. In the first 10 years, industrial emitters of nearly 200 toxic pollutants would be required to install the best available technology to limit releases.

Smaller Businesses Brace for Legislation

*Cleaner Air Means
Costly Machinery*

Fourth of five articles

By Paul Farhi
Washington Post Staff Writer

Wayne Poling jabbed one of his thick fingers in the direction of a huge industrial washing machine, a heaving, clanking beast that drones along with the sound of the pop music blaring from the overhead speakers.

"It seems like such a waste," he said above the din, "but I guess I'm going to have to get rid of it."

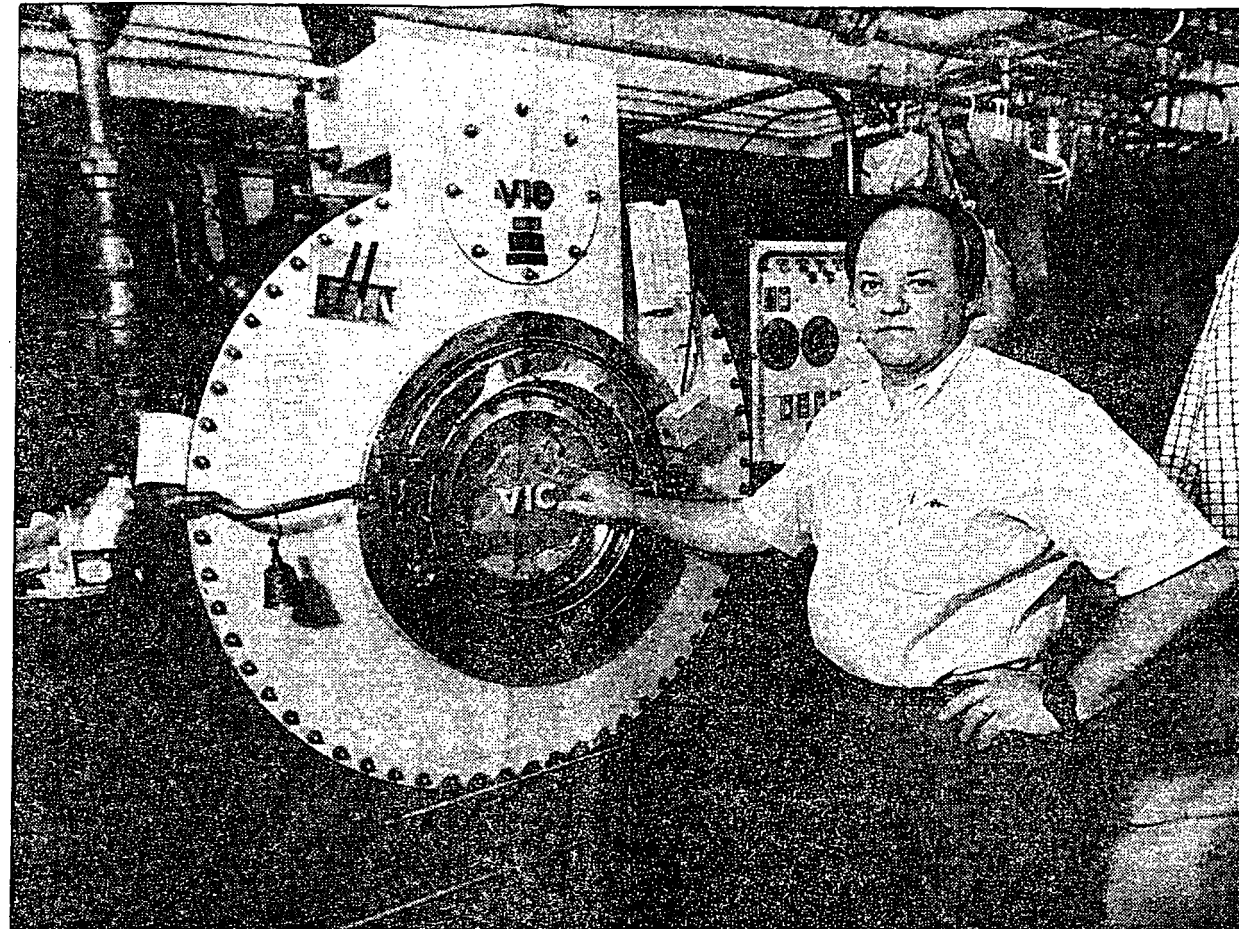
Poling, a stocky, round-faced man of 45, is standing in the back

COSTS OF CLEAN AIR

FOCUS ON SMALL BUSINESS

shop of his small Northern Virginia business, the Vienna One-Hour Cleaners, on Vienna's main drag 15 miles west of Washington. Just past the front counter, the big building givesway to the quarter-acre-sized back shop, a cluttered factory where a mountain of plaids, stripes and solids—12,000 pounds of laundry a week—gets sorted, cleaned, pressed and bagged in plastic.

Business has been good lately for Poling. He has a second location and draws customers from as far away as the District. But a note of doubt is unmistakable in his soft West Virginia accent. The problem is the washing and drying equipment on



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Wayne Poling, owner of Vienna One-Hour Cleaners, anticipates having to buy new equipment: "We all want clean air, but the question is, at what price?"

which his business is dependent. Like thousands of other dry cleaners, Poling's equipment uses a solvent called perchloroethylene instead of water to clean the mountain of clothes. "Perc," a suspected carcinogen, is one of 191 such compounds whose emissions would be restricted under revisions to the Clean Air Act, the landmark environmental bill whose passage in Congress appears imminent.

Even in this little corner of suburbia, cleaning the air carries a price.

Poling is concerned that new regulations will force him to replace the aging cleaning equipment grumbling away in a corner of the back shop. Machines that use a newer technology are better at controlling the perc that escapes into the atmosphere, where it could then be breathed by workers in the back shop. But the new machines are expensive and slower than the existing ones—in Poling's case, new equipment would cost him about \$100,000. The bottom line, according to Poling: Customers

should expect higher prices and an end to one-hour service.

"We all want clean air," Poling said, "but the question is, at what price? This is going to take a considerable investment. And most of the people in this business are like me, mom-and-pop operators."

For years, government efforts to clean the air have focused on the largest sources of pollution—automobiles, coal-burning utilities, oil refineries, chemical plants. But under the far-reaching provisions of the

Clean Air Act, thousands of small businesses that emit low levels of pollution-causing chemicals—from auto-repair shops to bakeries to the corner dry cleaner—may have to change the way they do business, according to both business advocates and environmentalists. In some cases, new equipment or new production processes may be needed; in others, it could mean a switch to different chemicals.

These changes may spur hardship
See CLEAN AIR, B5, Col. 1

Small Businesses Brace for New Pollution Standards

CLEAN AIR, From B1

and higher prices, but environmentalists argue that it's about time small businesses like Poling's begin bearing a greater share of the burden for cleaner air. After automobiles and big industries, small businesses are among the leading sources of toxic emissions, accounting for roughly 25 percent of the total, according to a study quoted by Daniel Weiss, the Sierra Club's director of environmental quality.

"Our belief is that the cost of the cleanup is far smaller than the damage done by not cleaning up," Weiss said. "How do you put a price on a pair of lungs?"

In fact, neither environmentalists nor business advocates know for sure how much the changes to the Clean Air Act will cost small businesses—or how much the environment will benefit. The final emissions guidelines that will effect small operators won't be written by the Environmental Protection Agency until after the bill becomes law. The impact could be cushioned by provisions in the House and Senate versions that instruct regulators to weigh the financial impact on small businesses when writing the new standards.

Implicit in those instructions is the expectation that complying with new environmental standards exacts a relatively higher cost on a small business than a large one. Unlike major industrial polluters, which have been forced to invest in pollution control for years, small businesses have largely avoided such pressures by the federal government, said Teresa Pugh, the National Association of Manufacturers's environmental lobbyist. Catching up will be costly, she said.

Large businesses have an advantage because their size allows them to distribute the increased costs of pollution control over a number of product lines, said Pugh. "Small-business people," Pugh argued, "are really going to be jolted by this."

To be sure he can meet higher stan-

dards, Poling has already contacted his banker about financing new dry cleaning equipment, even though he believes his old machine "probably could keep chugging for years."

The good news, he said, was that the bank agreed to finance new equipment without exhausting his line of credit. The bad news: The bank will lend him only 75 percent of the cost, which means Poling will need to come up with \$25,000 on his own. That's a tough nut for Poling, who is still paying back the debt he took on to buy the Vienna shop and another in nearby Oakton two years ago, the hard-won result of the 14 years he spent as an employee in the Vienna store. Although the customers keep coming, Poling figures the heavy debt he took on to buy the business means he won't turn a profit until 1993.

Poling has already outfitted the drying machine in his Vienna store with a vapor absorber, a \$6,000 charcoal filter that captures and permits recycling of much of the escaping perc fumes. For added protection, Poling's laundryman, Sambo Phorn, wears a respirator mask and latex gloves when transferring a load from washer to dryer. Ceiling vents keep the air circulating. The unanswered question is whether the EPA's final rules will consider these steps adequate.

Proud of his environmental record, Poling challenged a recent visitor to the back shop to detect the smell of perc in the air. The visitor said he smelled a faint chemical odor, but Poling quickly pointed to a table full of bottled spotting agents, suggesting that they were the source of the faint odor.

"I've worked in this shop for the past 16 years," Poling said. "I've got 44 employees. My children are in here all the time. Even my baby, she's 7 years old, she's running around here with her friends every day after school. Do you think I'd do anything to jeopardize their health?"

After 26 years of working in the dry cleaning business, Poling said he has

never heard of anyone dying of cancer. "Most of the time, we just get heart attacks from the stress," he said.

To bring about further reductions in the back shop's perc levels, Poling said he would have to get rid of his existing hardware, which is known as a "cold transfer" system because each load must be manually transferred at the end of the washing cycle to a separate drying unit. A newer type of dry cleaning equipment—grandiloquently known as a dry-to-dry no-vent refrigerated system—reduces emissions by containing both the wash and dry cycles in a single machine.

The problem is that the dry-to-dry system can handle only smaller loads and takes nearly three times as long as a transfer washer. Just to keep pace with his current volume, Poling would need to install at least two dry-to-dry units, at a cost of about \$50,000 each, including installation and renovation of the back shop. Since the machines would be going full bore just to keep up with regular orders, Poling said he would have to eliminate special one-hour orders. "I guess I'm going to have to change the name of the business," he chuckled.

Poling doesn't want to think about raising his prices, but he knows he may have to if forced to make a big capital investment.

Dave Norford, who owns a dry cleaners across the street from Poling's, spent \$65,000 to install a dry-to-dry system two years ago—and promptly raised his prices 5 percent to recover his costs. "It's an incredibly large investment," said Norford. "You absolutely have to pass it on."

But such concerns may be exaggerated, argued David Doniger, a senior staff attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group. Dry cleaners will see little in the way of pollution control if the EPA gives weight to industry claims of financial hardship, he asserted.

Under currently proposed legislation, EPA would study the financial burden its rules would place on busi-

nesses. Essentially, the rules could be relaxed if their impact is deemed catastrophic, but the failure of some businesses would probably be considered acceptable, said Bill Fisher, vice president of a dry cleaning trade group, the International Fabricare Institute in Silver Spring.

In any case, Doniger said, any increased costs of business will be industry-wide, putting Poling on the same footing as his competitors. "Americans are prisoners of dry cleaners," said Doniger. "We have to clean our clothes. If there are small increases of a few cents per garment it will be quite readily passed on" to consumers.

Fisher estimated that about 25 percent of the nation's 25,000 dry cleaners have already installed dry-to-dry machines. The IFI's surveys indicate that existing plants are installing the new technology once their old equipment wears out. In the meantime, the trade group has been pushing those with the old equipment to install vapor absorbers.

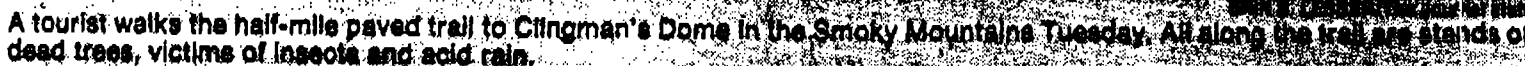
"If [the government] tells us vapor absorbers are enough [to meet the Clean Air Act's standards], we could not in good conscience predict terrible price increases," said Fisher. "That kind of cost can be gradually absorbed. But if everyone has to go with [the dry-to-dry unit], you're looking at some people going out of business. A potential capital investment of \$30,000 to \$50,000 is very scary."

Just ask Wayne Poling.

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Acid, insects threatening future of fir, spruce trees

The ancient red spruce and Fraser fir forests of the Smoky Mountains that survived the last Ice Age may now fall prey to acid and a plague of insects.

Over the past 27 years, 95 percent of the mature firs along the mountaintops of the Smokies have been killed by the balsam woolly adelgid, an imported insect species. Of 48,000 acres of mixed fir and 625 acres of pure stands that existed in 1963, fewer than 55 acres survive,

Each summer, park officials soak trunks of surviving trees with insecticide to try to save what remains, but scientists say acid from rain and clouds in amounts as high as anywhere in the U.S. could help finish off what the insects leave alive.

"I do see the forest essentially breaking up," said Paul Durr, bio-

logical technician with the Uplands Field Research Laboratory in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. "It will take a lot more study to understand the prognosis for survival of these species."

The fir and spruce trees that cap the mountaintops of the Smokies are the remnants of forests that grew in what is now the southern U.S. during the last Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago.

As the planet warmed and the glaciers retreated, the spruce/fir forests spread north again, and in the South, the trees could only survive on colder mountaintops. The Smokies contain 75 percent of the spruce/fir forests in the Southern Appalachians.

"They are well known globally for their rare species," Durr said. "Some have evolved to become

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of 45,000
dozens of
pigeons and
500 dozens of
blue birds
that existed
in 1963.
More than
50 species
in five

Forest

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strict local 'endemics' found nowhere else in the world."

But the Frasers are fading, and the spruces are suffering from slow growth that scientists think is the result of "acid deposition," or acid left by the rain, clouds and mist that give the mountains their name.

"The clouds have always been there, but with additional input from man's activities, they are very acidic," said Sandy McLaughlin, Senior Research Scientist with Oak Ridge National Laboratory's environmental sciences division.

Deposits of sulfur and nitrogen compounds from industrial emissions, including coal-fired power plants, turn soil and water acidic. This could lower trees' ability to absorb soil nutrients and leave them less able to cope with other threats, scientists say.

Researchers in the Smokies and at ORNL have been surprised to find that the higher-altitude peaks of the Smokies were being blanket-

ed with acid deposits as high as those found elsewhere in the country.

A recent survey found Clingman's Dome in the Smokies receives almost twice the acid of Whiteface Mountain in upstate New York, an area hit very hard by the problem.

The amounts in the Smokies were comparable to those in the Solling Forest in Germany near the Ruhr Valley, one of the heaviest industrial concentrations on Earth, said Steve Lindberg, a senior research staff member with Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

"Deposition of acids, sulfur and nitrogen compounds are probably as high here in the mountains of the Southeast — or higher — than they are in many other regions of the U.S.," Lindberg said.

While no definite link has been proven, McLaughlin said there is enough evidence to conclude that acid rain is taking its toll on the forests.

Durr cited studies showing 90 percent of mature red spruce trees in the forest were rated class-one healthy trees in 1985, but only 51 percent were in 1989. A decline in

growth has matched increases in air pollutants.

The spruces also suffer from the loss of the firs. Intertwined root systems are breaking up, and holes in the forest canopy increase the risk of surviving trees being blown down during storms, Durr said.

"They (red spruces) are sort of lonely-hearts up there," he said. "None of their fir comrades are there to hold them up."

Despite the complexity of the forest systems, scientists say they are beginning to put together the pieces of the acid rain puzzle, but funding for a nationwide 10-year research project runs out this year, and forest studies may be curtailed.

"They will be looking at a broader range of issues which will include some studies, probably at reduced level, of the problems with spruce and fir," McLaughlin said.

Other areas could wind up absorbing available research money, Durr added.

"We tend to go after 'sexy' issues," Durr said. "The 1980s was the decade of acid rain. The '90s will be the decade of global climate change."