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POLLUTION AND POLICY

By JAMES E. KRIER & EDMUND URSIN

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, Pp. 401, \$15.95

The authors believe that there is much to be learned from a study of past pollution control efforts. In this way, they argue, those directly involved in policy formation and those who propose alternatives from the outside can learn from past mistakes. To this end, the authors present chronologically and in great detail the history of state and federal attempts to deal with air pollution. The book's subtitle, "A Case Essay on California and Federal Experience with Motor Vehicle Air Pollution, 1940-1975," is descriptive of the effort but somewhat misleading. The focus is not completely on the automobile. Rather, the automobile serves as the theme around which the history and problems of air pollution are discussed. Consequently, the book is broader than the subtitle suggests but not as comprehensive as the title implies. And this is to its credit. The authors take a slice of the subject which is both manageable and interesting.

The main body of the book reviews the history of the "smog" problem in Los Angeles and governmental attempts to solve it. Smog was first acknowledged as a problem in 1943. The source of the problem was thought to be a synthetic rubber plant. After the plant spent \$1.5 million to control its emissions, the smog remained. This was to foreshadow future attempts at a solution. The authors point out that controls were instituted as the result of a crisis atmosphere, that they were based on highly uncertain information, and that government officials adopted the attitude that the problem had a technical base and hence a technical solution. This theme is repeated often as the authors take us through time and review other attempts to solve the problem.

The 1950's saw a growing realization that the automobile was a major source of the problem. The search for control devices started in a cooperative effort by automobile manufacturers. During this time attempts were made to institute automobile emission standards. The suggested standards were based on zero health effects and were as high as 90% removed. (Recall that these suggestions, made in the 1950's, closely resemble the provisions of the 1970 Clean Air Act.)

The 1960's saw increased efforts to control automotive emissions. Some controls were installed on new cars voluntarily in the early 1960's. An attempt was made to require the installation of similar devices on used cars. At first, these devices were to be installed at the

time of change in ownership. However, when an attempt was made to require them on all automobiles, even if not transferred, the political reaction killed the program. Toward the end of the 1960's, first California, then the federal government required emission reductions from the exhaust of new cars.

During the 1960's the shift in legislative action toward greater federal involvement began. The 1965 Clean Air Act Amendments required national emission controls on new 1968 model year automobiles which were equivalent to the 1966 California standards. California narrowly avoided federal preemption in the 1967 Amendments. The perceived slow rate of progress toward control of sources other than new automobiles helped to set the stage for major federal intervention in 1970. The 1970 Clean Air Act required state action to control or EPA would take over. Furthermore, the law and EPA's interpretation of it lead to an unachievable control task. California officials refused to comply. Eventually EPA was required to achieve the unachievable. In 1975 California openly challenged EPA authority. Although the book's coverage ends with 1975, it eventually worked out that EPA could not force a state to adopt and enforce regulations.

The authors identify several themes running through this history of pollution policy. Until 1970 policy was very conservative, making only the smallest advance with each change. Those who proposed change had to prove that it was necessary. Policy was changed in response to crises, not to avoid them. Policy was concerned almost exclusively with technical fixes rather than changes in incentives. And pollution officials were continually under attack for going too slow.

From the beginning the authors argue that much can be learned from the study of this history. Indeed, as one works through the book, the degree to which mistakes are repeated and policies not changed, even though there was a preponderance of evidence that they are not successful, proves very enlightening.

The major failing of the book is that it does not explain why policy developed as it did. There are hints here and there but no significant analysis. Why, for example, do federal and state agencies retain faith in the technological fix when it has not worked? Why has there been continued delay? It seems to me that the answer lies in the self-interest of the policy makers and constraints imposed by the institutional structure of the law. Consequently, the authors' solution, which they call Management Standards, does not solve the basic problem. They do not explain why a state would comply with their proposed procedures. If they were willing to comply, they have the

power to do so without federal legislation but progress remains slow. Again I believe that constrained self-interest provides an explanation.

In summary, it is an excellent book. The review of history is most complete. Everything is there to be analyzed, interpreted, and used as one sees fit. It is a highly competent scholarly work worthy of much praise and even more use.

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