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Letters

ACS tax-exempt status

SIR: I, like many other young chemists I know, consider chemistry to be my religion (how else could I justify the time and energy devoted to it?). As its governing body and guiding light, ACS should declare itself a religious organization and thereby ensure its favorable tax status.

Susan J. Kohler

Assistant Professor, Mount Holyoke College

Source of dioxins

SIR: Rebecca L. Rawls, C&EN Washington, is to be congratulated for pulling together facts on the controversial dioxins (C&EN, Feb. 12, page 22). Interestingly, there are three excerpts which serve as a basis for the clarification of the source of dioxins.

"Many studies of 2,3,7,8-TCDD in the environment indicate that it breaks down fairly rapidly via photodegradation in the air" (page 24).

"That told us that the problem was not a waterborne problem, but an airborne problem, because where we collected the samples in the laboratory had never been and could never be under water," Bumb explains (page 25).

"But dioxins bound to particulate matter can pass through incinerators operating at temperatures as high as 1150° C with no change in concentration" (page 28).

In light of these comments this author recalls that the stockpile of Agent Orange, some 24.5 million lb, was disposed by ocean incineration by the Air Force. This author suggests that TCDD was not from Pandora's box, but that these dioxin materials may have been made airborne in the planned disposal of Agent Orange. I recall that the incinerators aboard ship operated between 1100° and 1200° C. Could it be possible that this practice of ocean incineration put dioxins into a "chemical cloud" that is now floating out everywhere, all too reminiscent of radioactive fallout?

Stan Miller

Managing Editor, Environmental Science & Technology

Taking issue with Costle

SIR: On the Editor's Page (C&EN, Jan. 15) you carried excerpts from a talk by Douglas Costle, head of the Environmental Protection Agency and appointed chairman of the Regulatory Council. I'd like to take issue with one of his statements.

Sir, you do have a profit motive, namely, to so conduct the regulatory process that the profitability of our industries is preserved without inflationary price increases.

You do have stockholders—we are all your stockholders, and we demand our dividends in the form of a strong economy, unslackened from the demands for redundant and duplicated reports, some of which are of questionable value, so that our jobs and incomes are preserved, and

our living standard is not destroyed by ment-generated inflation.

You do have snares in the company all are tax-paying U.S. citizens, even the collectively act as though you were accountable considerations.

You do have a year-end bonus, or you have, because your continuation in a public trust should be contingent upon performance in that position.

Many government employees, particularly appointive positions, act as though they are the U.S., but not of it. It is they who have public confidence in the government. Robert S. Rabinowich, N.Y.

SIR: In response to Mr. Costle's views on the Regulatory Council I can't help but question an unfortunate contradiction in claiming evident efficacy of government regulations. Costle first proposes that since government officials are paid to be "cost effective" having no profit motive they have no choice to do a good job. Unfortunately, he also states that the purpose of the newly formed Regulatory Council is to "identify and eliminate inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and red tape" which have come to characterize some of [the Council's] efforts.

Why is he defending a bureaucracy which admits has not fulfilled its function? There is a more subtle contradiction in Costle's claim. He continues, "If we cannot produce effective regulations, we are as bankrupt a company that can't sell its product." Let us assume the point that regulators don't have to sell their product. The market is captive and effective.

I would therefore recommend that instead of defending the white knight of his agency, Costle concentrate on urging regulators to become more professional. Only then would we, the American people, be assured that the regulators are working for our profit by providing truly cost effective regulations.

Berkeley, Calif.

Bradley S.

In favor of metric

SIR: Prof. Boulding's guest editorial (C&EN 29) is a tired argument against the metric system. It makes no mention of SI (international system of units), which was established in 1960. His views on the metric system are at best fashioned and illogical. He argues for diversity, yet he insists on convenience.

The metric system has been adopted in France, Canada, Australia, and virtually all non-English-speaking countries in the world (excluding Brunei, Burma, Liberia, Arab Republic of Yemen, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen). Failure of the U.S. to convert to the metric system will eventually cost the U.S. of billions of dollars in loss of trade and foster a "metric" language barrier. Pope in his "Essay on Criticism" 1633.