

As Davis lay on his back on the ground, a passerby extended a helping hand while police and demonstrators ducked other flying rocks and bottles.

Air pollution Moss Landing Plant *SF Chron* 11/9/69

Pollution Attack on PG&E

From Our Correspondent

Monterey

A golden-yellow plume of gas streaming from the stacks of the Pacific Gas & Electric Co's huge power

ay in S. F.

new 24-hour record for natural gas consumption in Northern California, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company reported. A total of 3.4 billion cubic feet was delivered up to 7 a.m., Wednesday, about 75 million over the old 1967 record.

er plant at Moss Landing is arousing citizens along this coastal area from Santa Cruz to Big Sur.

The gas is composed of oxides of nitrogen, a key compound in the air pollution problems of centers like Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Until last fall it was unknown around the shores of Monterey Bay. It has erupted since the utility expanded its Moss Landing plant to make it the largest of its type in America.

Now PG&E has pledged to curb the fumes from its smokestacks, but the Air Pollution Control District that em-

braces Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties is weighing proposals for tough new standards specifically regulating the power plant's emissions.

Yesterday, here in Monterey, a newly-formed Citizens Committee for Clean Air led by a group of biologists and physicians charged that the plant is an "encroachment on health and an affront to aesthetics."

The Committee announced plans for a protest meeting here Friday at noon, and a march through Monterey's streets to the P. G. & E. offices.

On Monday the ten mem-

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Moss Landing

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bers of the Air Pollution Control District — five Supervisors from each county — meet in Santa Cruz to consider two new regulations proposed by the District's advisory committee.

One would limit discharge of oxides of nitrogen from the Moss Landing plant's stacks to 500 parts of gas per million parts of air. The other would insist that when the plant burns fuel oil in winter it use only high-quality oil containing less than half of one per cent sulphur.

EFFORTS

Utility company officials opposed both rules at a meeting in Salinas last month, but have repeatedly pledged continuing efforts to eliminate the fumes.

They said that when the big plant was enlarged last fall oxides of nitrogen were emitted at a rate of 1475 parts per million. Changes in boiler operation have already cut this to 1000 parts per million, the engineers said, and new techniques are being devised to cut the emissions still further.

At a press conference at Moss Landing Tuesday PG&E vice president Frederick W. Mielke Jr. said that air pollution is a "subject of intense concern" to the company. He noted that this year, when the plant was expanded, the nitrate fumes appeared for the first time to the complete "amazement" of engineers.

The plant burns natural gas most of the year, and natural gas is considered one of the cleanest of all fuels — as an answer, in fact, to many air pollution problems, Mielke said.

He noted the company has retained consultants in meteorology and engineering to minimize pollution by the plant and to study the area's weather patterns to make sure the emitted gas poses no health or crop hazards.

The company contends that its high stacks and the local winds dissipate the emissions

before any harmful gases reach the ground.

But Dr. John R. Goldsmith, a physician and head of the State Health Department's environmental epidemiology unit, said that predicting ground concentration of the gases is difficult until more is known about the local meteorology and wind patterns of the Moss Landing area.

CONSEQUENCES

The power plant's emissions of nitrogen gases, he said, "could have pretty significant consequences affecting the agricultural industry of the area if the gases react with hydrocarbons and the reaction products remain near ground level for any length of time."

Dr. Goldsmith said the possibility of human health hazards, while more remote, should still be weighed carefully.

A group of scientists from Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove and the University of California at Santa Cruz charged that the Moss Landing plant is now emitting more oxides of nitrogen every day than all the power plants in Los Angeles. High levels of ozone—an irritating gas that is a reaction product of the stack gases with hydrocarbons—have been found at ground level nearby, they said.

A company spokesman said the scientists' figures are exaggerated, but that the important thing is to make detailed ground-level studies throughout the year. The utility pledged to co-operate with the Air Pollution Control district in these studies.

"P.G.&E. is committed to finding a way to eliminate the yellow-brown haze," said vice president Mielke. "We have good reason to believe the problem can be solved. We are giving this matter attention at the highest levels in our company, and we have retained the foremost experts we can find to assist us."