

London treaty calls for total ban on chlorofluorocarbons by 2000

by Rogelio A. Maduro

In a precedent-setting agreement, most of the world's nations buckled under lies and pressure from the environmental lobby and voted to halt all production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by the end of the century. Ninety-three nations signed the treaty during the London Conference on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer June 29, going far beyond the original Montreal treaty signed in 1987, which called for a 50% reduction in the production of the chemicals by 1998.

The treaty was signed despite mounting scientific evidence that the claims that CFCs are depleting the ozone layer are a scientific fraud.

Simultaneous with the London conference, the Du Pont Corp. announced it is moving to build "world scale" plants around the world to produce chemicals that can replace CFCs. Du Pont spokesmen told the press that the company intends to invest over \$1 billion over the next years to take the lead in commercializing production of alternative refrigerants. The profits to be made in this race are staggering. Du Pont's lead candidate to replace the most widely used refrigerant, CFC-12, is HFC-134a. Although Du Pont has originally claimed its patented chemical, HFC-134a, would cost only three times more than CFCs in present use, the actual cost will be closer to 30 times greater. Du Pont's substitute is now available for testing, and air conditioning repairmen are being told the cost, when it comes out on the market, will be \$15 a pound—far above the 50¢ per pound that freon (CFC-12) used to cost. As documented in previous issues of *EIR*, industry experts estimated that replacing CFCs under the original Montreal protocol would cost about \$200 billion over the next 10 years. Now that the real cost of Du Pont's replacements are being revealed, and the much more stringent London CFC ban is approved, the price tag will zoom.

Speaking on the day the London treaty was signed, Environmental Protection Administration chief William K. Reilly announced that the Justice Department had begun a forceful campaign against violators of existing CFC regulations in the United States. Reilly, who headed the U.S. delegation to the London conference, told the press that Justice had sued five importers of CFCs alleging violations of the Clean Air Act and an obscure EPA rule restricting importation of the substances.

The London conference

Even before the ink was dry on the London treaty, environmentalists were hailing the conference as a great victory that points the way toward a global treaty on the atmosphere, to be signed in Brazil in 1992. This call was fully backed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during the opening speech of the conference. Thatcher, seemingly attempting to outdo Chicken Little with her predictions of doomsday from an allegedly disappearing ozone layer, urged the world community to draw up and ratify a convention on global climate changes, modeled after the London treaty. Reilly called the London treaty the most significant agreement ever reached on an environmental issue.

The London treaty, once ratified, will impose:

- A total ban in the production and use in new products of all CFCs by the year 2000. It also mandates a 50% reduction in the production of CFCs by 1995, with a meeting scheduled to take place in 1992, when they may impose a complete ban on all CFCs by 1997. This would include all CFCs used in refrigeration, air conditioning, foam blowers, and solvents.
- A total ban on halons by the year 2000. Halons are the best firefighting chemicals known, and the ban is expected to cost the lives of hundreds of people in the U.S. every year, especially in the military.
- A complete ban on carbon tetrachloride by the year 2000, and a total ban on methyl chloroform by the year 2005. This will have a devastating effect on the electronics industry, since these chemicals are nearly irreplaceable as solvents and cleaners for electronics parts and equipment. These chemicals, it should be noted, are not CFCs, and no scientific evidence has even been put forward to show that they endanger the ozone layer. They were not included in the original Montreal Protocol.

The treaty creates a new international body to supervise the ban on CFCs, and also to administer a \$240 million fund being used to entice poor nations into signing the treaty in the belief that they will receive financial help to offset the costs of the ban. Since a ban on CFCs will cost at least \$200 billion over the next decade, the amount of the fund is quite pitiful.

The corporate environmentalists

One of the first effects of the ban will be to force the emerging chemical industries in the Third World out of business. India, China, Brazil, Taiwan, and South Korea were bringing large chemical complexes on line for the production of CFCs. All the major chemical corporations have already spent over \$200 million in the frantic race to be the first in patenting replacements for CFCs. Any chemical corporation that wishes to stay in the business will have to spend at least \$1 billion for the privilege. Bankrupt Third World nations can ill afford those huge sums, and they do not have the scientific cadre to find their own replacements. Part of the problem is also that CFCs are simply the best, safest, and cheapest chemicals to do the job that is expected of them.

One of the most interesting questions, is why Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher performed such a dramatic turn-about, becoming the Green Lady? Her special adviser on CFCs is Denys Henderson, chairman of Imperial Chemicals Industries, one of those chemical giants that stands to profit mightily from a ban on CFCs. It should be further noted that the heir to the ICI family fortune, Lord Peter Melchett, is the executive director of Greenpeace in Great Britain. Greenpeace has led the campaign worldwide against CFCs. Perhaps Thatcher believes she can stave off Britain's bankruptcy by eliminating its competition.

In the United States, the campaign against CFCs has been led by the giant Du Pont Corp. Once the staunchest supporters of CFCs, Du Pont made a sudden turnaround in 1986, following its takeover by Canada's Seagram's, controlled by Edgar and Charles Bronfman. Retired officials of Du Pont say it was the Bronfmans and former Du Pont chairman Irving Shapiro who forced the change in policy.

Barely three days before the London conference opened, on June 21, Du Pont announced it would build production facilities worldwide to produce replacements for CFCs. Plants are planned for Corpus Christi, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; Dordrecht, the Netherlands; and Chiba, Japan. They will become operational between 1992 and 1995. The facilities will be capable of producing more than 140 million pounds annually, and the company claims it can supply most worldwide refrigeration needs through the end of the century. Du Pont will be manufacturing mainly HFC-134a, a hydrofluorocarbon. Since this chemical has no chlorine, it is supposed to be safe for the ozone layer. It also has major problems. HFC-134a destroys all present lubricants in refrigeration systems, which means compressors grind themselves to pieces. It cannot be used in existing refrigerators and air conditioners. It is much more inefficient than CFCs, and it also costs 30 times more. No wonder consumers have to be scared into believing that the sky is falling.

The environmental gestapo

The CFC ban will not occur easily, however, since CFCs permeate our modern society. The environmental gestapo in

Washington has made it clear they intend to use brute force. On June 29, Unitor Ships Service, Inc. of Long Beach, California, Fehr Brothers, Inc. of New York, and three other companies were accused of having imported CFCs into the United States without obtaining permits from the EPA. The requirement is the result of a Jan. 1, 1989 rule governing production and import of CFCs. None of the companies had been given prior notice of the rule.

Paul Berg, president of Unitor Ships Service, told the *Los Angeles Times* that he was "rather upset" about the suit, "because we were advised wrongly" by the EPA's Seattle office. According to the *Times*, Unitor in 1989 "responded to a cruise ship's emergency call for CFC-11 by transferring 1,270 kilograms of the coolant from its Vancouver office—after first checking with the EPA, Berg said. He added that Unitor exported a similar amount of the substance to Canada when it learned of EPA's objection. He said EPA has proposed a settlement, the amount of which he would not disclose, and his company has accepted. 'We don't have the resources to fight the government,' he said. If it lost the case in court, Berg said, it could be fined as much as \$25,000 for each kilogram of CFC that it imported."

In New York, Fehr Brothers, Inc. immediately settled its case, agreeing to pay a \$101,935 penalty. A company spokesman pointed out to *EIR* that they had never heard of the regulation under which they had been indicted, and it was too complicated to defend themselves. Fehr Brothers was accused by the EPA of importing 192,000 kilograms of CFC-113, a cleaning solvent, without requesting the EPA's permission. Under the EPA regulation, Fehr Brothers could have been fined as much as \$4.8 billion for the violation, had they not agreed to settle so quickly. Fehr Brothers now intends to leave the CFC business altogether.

The settlement has given the environmental gestapo the precedent for prosecuting other importers, producers, and users of CFCs. Otto G. Obermaier, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that the Fehr Brothers settlement is the first proposed consent decree in the nation enforcing the new regulations. He called the settlement "a first and important step in enforcing the environmental laws protecting stratospheric ozone." James M. Strock, EPA Assistant Administrator for Enforcement, said, "This case demonstrates EPA's commitment to vigorous enforcement of the provisions of the Montreal Protocol. EPA will pursue violators of the regulations on stratospheric ozone to the full extent of the law." Although the legislation does not yet exist, the next step will be long jail terms for individuals who violate the absurd CFC regulations. The new Clean Air Act which President Bush is expected to sign by the end of the summer has a section mandating jail terms of one year or longer, not only for individuals who release insignificant amounts of CFCs into the air, but also those who provide technologies to Third World nations to manufacture CFCs.