

# The Public Interest Campaign

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MAY 17 1973

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Dear Friend,

In 1970, I supervised a citizen investigation of the federal air pollution control program which was the basis for the report entitled Vanishing Air. Among other findings, our report concluded that the government was wasting nearly 100 million tax dollars a year on ineffective and fraudulent programs. At that time we found the government setting automobile emission standards riddled with loopholes, certifying new cars as meeting the standards for 50,000 miles which actually met the standards for only 4,000 miles, and allowing the automakers to charge consumers several hundred million dollars a year for emission controls which did not work.

I wish I could report to you that the situation has greatly improved in 1972. I cannot. For instance, a new air pollution control law now requires 1975 automobiles to meet theoretically stronger emission standards. But the law is only as strong as its enforcement. The government's interpretation of the law has been extraordinarily charitable to the automakers. As the situation stands now 1975 hydrocarbon emissions will be four times higher than a limit based on public health protection would permit.

This is but one example of how apparently "strong" legislation can be undermined by ineffective administration. Only citizen vigilance can break this pattern of halfhearted enforcement in the area of atmospheric pollution. An organization has been created to perform this function. The Public Interest Campaign is a new citizen group organized to provide regular surveillance over the Environmental Protection Agency's air pollution control program. We invite you to join and support this effort.

The Public Interest Campaign will issue a monthly Washington report called "Clean Air" which will detail the victories and defeats in the battle against automotive air pollution. The Campaign will stress motor vehicle emission control particularly because autos cause roughly 40 to 80% of the air pollution in our major urban areas, and enforcement authority for auto emission control lies primarily with the federal government.

I believe an increasing number of Americans want to know more about what is happening in air pollution control than they are told in self-serving government press releases. Government claims in this field do not square with the realities. Think about it--recently you probably have heard numerous claims to the effect that air pollution is decreasing. Yet last year the nation's capital, an example of a city where the auto is responsible for most of the air pollution, experienced record numbers of pollution alerts and pollution levels.

"Clean Air" is being written to inform citizens, public officials, scientists and industrialists. The public needs to be informed to protect itself. Public officials, especially at the state and local levels, need to know when EPA quietly makes concessions to the automakers and shifts more of the burden of pollution control to their level of government. Scientists studying air pollution need to know when the problem is caused as much by bureaucracy and politics as chemistry. And industrialists, with whom we are often but not always at odds, need to know of changes in the market for their pollution control products. The Campaign will be working for the application of the most effective, efficient and economical emission controls.

"Clean Air" will bring you this information. Armed with the facts and insights The Campaign will provide, you can work and help us work more effectively for healthful air. Join The Public Interest Campaign and get "Clean Air."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Esposito".

John Esposito  
Chairman