

Stories by

# Louis Lombardo on Air

Thomas Grubisich

Washington Post Staff Writer

Cary Shaw, Louis Lombardo, Sam Smith—each of them has a full-time cause: putting pressure on institutions for what they consider progressive change. Shaw fights for a bigger voice for bicycles in transportation planning. Lombardo fights for tougher enforcement of clean-air laws. Smith fights for vitalization of city life. Their stories are told on this page.

THE SUBSCRIBERS to the monthly report Clean Air are too numerous to fit in a telephone booth, but they could all fit, very comfortably, on three rows in the bleachers of Kennedy Stadium.

Louis V. Lombardo, editor of the report, knows he'll never have thousands of subscribers. He'll happily settle for 250—not just any 250, but people who are among “the 2,000 to 5,000 professionals in air-pollution control nationwide who probably have a strong need to know what we have to say.”

Many of these professionals work for government and industry, both of which have been repeatedly criticized by Clean Air for not doing enough to reduce pollution. Yet, to have any effect where policies are made, Lombardo feels he has to reach these peo-

ple. Besides, their money is as good as anybody else's. A subscription for 12 issues is \$125 a year. Still short of his circulation goal, financing Clean Air is a struggle for Lombardo.

Lombardo, who lives in Bethesda and publishes in Washington, also aims his report at Capitol Hill and the media, but, he says with resignation, “they are used to freebies.”

Clean Air does not lobby for legislation. Because it is part of a tax-deductible organization, the Public Interest Campaign (which consists almost entirely of Lombardo), it can't. Complains Lombardo: “The automobile industry can go to Congress, the oil industry can go to Congress, the executive branch can go to Congress, but

See CLEAN, Page H4, Col. 1



By Craig Herndon—The Washington Post

Louis Lombardo with son Peter collects street dirt to test for settled lead particles, whose major source is automobile emissions.

# Report Airs Environmental Issues

## CLEAN, From H1

groups like ours can't. It's like David fighting Goliath with one hand tied behind his back."

To bring cleaner air, Lombardo's report fights for changes other than legislation—in the offices and suites of the administrators who implement the laws.

Lombardo's strategy and tactics are closely tailored to the intricacies of how things get done in Washington. To Lombardo, how a law is administered can be as crucial as the law itself. So he uses his report to put pressure on administrators—monitoring pollution programs, reviewing proposed regulations, petitioning for tougher regulations under existing legislation.

Lombardo says environmentalists don't have to accept bad administrative decisions on the environment. "If a decision of an agency is not supported by the record," he says, "citizens can demand judicial review. So we try to add to the record with Clean Air."

On automotive lead emissions alone this year, the report filed six comments with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Lombardo says industry has been applying such pressures for years. "When industry argues for conces-

sions on standards," he says, "it never tries to influence the administrative process through bribes. It says, look at the scientific basis for the standards, look at the technical problems. Isn't it in the public interest to do such and such? Public agencies tend to be neutral and go the way pressure is being applied.

"If there are not countervailing pressures," he says, using the language of consumer advocate Ralph Nader, "there is no hope. We don't delude ourselves that because we present opposing arguments we're going to prevail. But that's the first step.

"We're playing the game the same way industry plays the game, only more honestly. If General Motors wanted to influence administrative decision-making, they'd see the right bureaucrats and file thick, well-documented briefs with the agencies. But they don't tell anybody about it. The public never knows. We do all of that out in the open."

In fighting for clean air, Lombardo's report has used most of its six to ten pages monthly for attacks on car-emission standards. The May issue was headed: "Warning: Lead Poisoning Season Is Coming." Most of the issue was devoted to the EPA's proposed regulation which

would reduce the amount of lead additives in gasoline to 1.25 grams per gallon by 1978. Clean Air said that was too high.

To prove his case, Lombardo studied lead levels in New York City, where the amount of lead permitted in gasoline has been restricted to 1 gram per gallon since January, 1972. Among his findings, duly filed with the EPA record:

"The data indicate that after a year of regulating the lead content of New York City gasoline, the level on sidewalks (is) still . . . dangerously high . . . on the order of 1,500 parts per million. At this level only 112 mg of dirt need be ingested by a 2- to 3-year-old child in a 24-hour period for the child to exceed the maximum daily permissible intake level of lead. Pediatricians at the Senate Commerce Committee hearing, May 8, 1972, have testified that this amount of dirt is easily eaten by an inner-city child in a 24-hour period by thumb-sucking or eating dropped items of food . . .

"The conclusion is inescapable: EPA's proposed regulations cannot provide adequate protection of the health of inner-city children."

The chief victims of air pollution, Lombardo says, are inner-city residents, and yet, he charges, little is done

to protect their health.

Lombardo thinks that the first aim of air pollution control should be to protect people's health, not their environment. But health doesn't get this kind of attention, he says. He cites carbon monoxide standards:

"The standard we're shooting for would allow 1.5 per cent deprivation of the blood's oxygen-carrying capacity. That sounds like nothing, especially since .5 per cent deprivation is considered normal. But when it takes only 30 to 50 per cent deprivation to kill you, then 1 per cent becomes a little more significant. Industry says it's like eating a big meal or giving a pint of blood. But for a middle-aged man, overweight and smoking, 1 per cent additional deprivation may be critical. It really becomes outrageous. They're saying as one of the prices of mobility, we're going to take away 1 per cent of your blood."

A sampling among people who are involved in air-pollution control—in Congress, governmental agencies and industry—came up with mixed opinions about Clean Air's usefulness.

One congressional staff member who has worked on clean air legislation said, "It's worth looking at. Occasionally it calls attention to problems we're not aware of. A lot of it is polemics, and

I kind of write that off. On balance, I find it reliable."

Fred Hart, the commissioner of air resources in New York City, said, "Lombardo's work (on lead levels in city dirt samples) has been somewhat substantiated . . . His work is very useful.

Eric Stork, EPA's director of mobile-source air pollution control, said, "(Clean Air) didn't make much of an impression on me. I don't know if it is a monthly, weekly or quarterly."

Gus Buenz, an official at GM's Washington headquarters, said, "We read his newsletter, but we don't have any comment."

Lombardo used to be a member of EPA's bureaucracy. He was fired in December, 1971, for refusing to report to the EPA's car-testing laboratory in Ypsilanti, Mich. Lombardo saw the transfer as an exile.

At the time, some environmentalists portrayed Lombardo as a fighter for tougher standards for cars who had to be sacrificed by weak-willed administrators, who had capitulated to Detroit.

Lombardo is reluctant to draw a black and white case. "The case was not a simple one," he said. "I was a pawn in intra-agency struggles." But he also said, "It was clear that the people who won did not want others who were tough on pollution."