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CFC (Chlorofluorocarbon) Alliance Conference

Max S. Baucus

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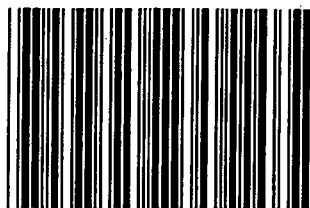
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(2) Subject* **Speech to CFC Alliance Conference**

DOCUMENT DATE*: **03/25/1987**

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* "required information"



BAUCUS

SPEECH TO CFC ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

March 26, 1987

CFC's -- Chloroflourocarbons. They were thought to be the ideal chemical -- non-toxic, non-flammable, non-explosive.

It turns out CFC's are far from ideal. They're slowly eating away at our protective ozone layer. They're stable -- too stable. Nothing seems to affect them. They just slowly float upward into the stratosphere. There they react with ozone -- over and over again.-- depleting our ozone, molecule by molecule.

Even though we don't have all the scientific data, we have enough to know that we must act now.

The EPA is under a court order to act. The United Nations has called for international action. Next month the third round of negotiations to develop an international protocol will take place in Vienna. By late this summer, a protocol could be completed.

Senator Chafee and I have each introduced legislation to reduce ozone depletion by 95-percent in the next eight years.

The alliance itself supports international efforts to address the problem.

Agreement stops there

Agreement stops there. How far we need to go -- and how fast we move -- are questions with little or no agreement.

I believe that from a competitive standpoint, from a trade standpoint and from a scientific standpoint, we must move forcefully to develop substitutes and get them into the marketplace.

We've heard the arguments that our scientific data still don't justify substitutes. I don't agree.

The Science

Since 1974, when Drs. Rowland and Molina first proposed that CFC's were destroying stratospheric ozone, the case has steadily grown against man-made chlorine or bromine based chemicals.

While Rowland's theory has never been disproved, every other theory has eventually fallen by the wayside.

It is important to recognize that current international negotiations are based upon assumptions that ozone depletion would occur at some point in the future.

We are now measuring ozone depletions up to 90-percent in certain levels of the stratosphere over Antarctica in the spring. Last October's expedition to the Antarctic didn't prove a link between man-made chlorine chemicals, but it sure points the finger.

Last week, Don Heath from NASA testified at a House hearing that his data showed ozone thinning over North Dakota. His data don't have unanimous support in the scientific community. But that isn't the issue.

The issue is that every study seems to point the finger at CFC's.

Need for Substitutes

My concern is that once all the evidence is in, CFC's will be indicted, but substitutes won't be available.

We will find ourselves confronting tremendous economic dislocations, as well as an increased risk of skin cancer for people not even born yet.

Competitive Advantage

As a public servant with a responsibility to set public policy, I don't want to face this scenario.

What I want to see is the United States leading the world in the development of safe substitutes.

United State industry would then have a competitive advantage. We would have the safe substitutes needed to address a serious worldwide environmental problem.

I agree that to completely solve the problem, every nation must act to control CFC's. But the lack of total international agreement is clearly not a reason for us to sit on our hands.

The United States is responsible for 25 to 40 percent of bulk CFC use. In addition, although figures don't exist, we are importing many products containing CFC's.

User Concerns

When I talk to those of you who use CFC's, the concern I hear most is that substitutes don't exist. You tell me that precipitous action will put you out of business.

That's exactly what I want to avoid. But forestalling the development of substitutes is a prescription for a crisis.

The legislation Senator Chafee and I introduced presents different ways to reach the same policy. I am not inflexible in my approach, and I believe Senator Chafee feels the same way.

What we are committed to is developing substitutes in a timely fashion so we reduce adverse effects on the environment. I say reduce because a certain amount of ozone depletion is already "in the bank."

With or without an international protocol, certain countries will not ratify an accord. We will be confronted with the problem of non-signers.

That should not stop us. We must focus our attention on doing what is right. We must gain a competitive advantage by marketing substitutes.

Frankly, I have been appalled at the ineptitude of the Commerce Department in addressing this issue. As users, you have been sold short. This type of treatment is inexcusable.

My challenge to you is to work with me to come to grips with the problem and find an equitable solution. I am committed to developing safe substitutes. I am flexible on how we do that.

I hope an international protocol which actually moves towards reductions will be adopted. The United States has put a strong proposal on the table.

If this protocol fails, or does not go far enough, we will need to move forward on our own.