

環境保護署署長於 2000 年 3 月 29 日(星期三)
在"Hong Kong Today"電台節目中接受訪問的逐字紀錄本
**Transcript of Director of Environment Protection's Interview on
"Hong Kong Today" on Wednesday, 29 March 2000**

Programme host :

Well, to discuss the worsening air pollution, we are joined on the line by the Director of Environmental Protection, Robert LAW. Mr. LAW, good morning to you.

Mr Robert LAW :

Good morning.

Programme host :

Thanks for joining us this morning. Do you think it's time now for some introduction of emergency measures.

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, I was listening to what Selina had to say before and I couldn't agree more that this sort of air pollution that we are suffering is going to give Hong Kong a bad name from the tourists' point of view. The problem that we are facing, as I said to you yesterday morning, is that there is really very little that can be done to speed up the cleaning of the air quality problem. The problem is far more complex, I think, than some people think. And really there are no simple quick magic solutions to make it alright.

Programme host :

No quick simple magic solutions, but we seem or appear to have been putting up with this worsening air pollution problem for a long time now, and very little actions seems to have been taken.

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, I myself, I think, is probably more frustrated than you are about this, because we put before the Legislative Council about 5 or 6 years ago the problem and predicted it was going to get worse. At that stage, we proposed that we should change the diesel taxis and minibuses over to using petrol, using unleaded petrol and catalytic converters which could have certainly dealt with about 25% of the problem that we've got now. Unfortunately, we weren't successful in getting their support and the trade wouldn't support it either. What we have been doing since then is desperately trying to find other solutions that would be politically and also economically acceptable to the

trade. I think most people are probably aware that we're trying to get the taxis and minibuses now to change over to LPG gas as quick as possible, but there are practical difficulties with that. As I mentioned yesterday.....

Programme host :

Yes, but people who phoned us often said that why can't the LPG stations be built. What's the problem with building these stations ?

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, the simple problem is that when you have compressed LPG gas, you have a potentially hazardous situation. You can't just put them in any old place because if there is an accident at one of these stations through the filling operations, then it could be potentially, extremely serious.

Programme host :

So, we're not going to build these stations?

Mr Robert LAW :

We are building these stations, we are building them as fast as we can. They take time to build as well.

Programme host :

Why do you have to get the support of the industry or the taxi industry ? Why can't the Government just tell them they are going to have to change ?

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, I would love to do that. Last time we tried that and we didn't get the support of the Legislative Council for the legislation.

Programme host :

So, the legislators were letting you down ?

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, certainly the last time. We have their support this time, but I am afraid that the technology that we are having to use takes time. We have to bring in special LPG vehicles, we have to get filling stations, etc, as I have mentioned before.

Programme host :

Is it reluctant support from the legislators ?

Mr Robert LAW :

I don't think it is reluctance this time. I think, probably, the difficulty was that the last time when we were warning them of the difficulties we were going to have with the air pollution problems, they were not so self-evident. This time it is there for everyone to see with the haze, and everyone is noticing at the moment. But I would like to make one other comment. We are able to deal with the situation on our own doorsteps through these measures. But if you travel between here and Guangzhou today, we will find that it is just as hazy all the way to Guangzhou. There is a quite a serious regional air pollution problem that has now developed, and we need to work with our counterparts in Guangdong to help resolve that as well.

Programme host :

It seems there is plenty of exchanges between you and your counterparts but very little action.

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, again, I am afraid there is no quite magic fix to this. Economic development tends to mean a lot more vehicles on the road, a lot more factories and that means a lot more pollution. Just the same as it is in Hong Kong, as our economy has grown, we are producing more waste. They are experiencing exactly the same problems.

Programme host :

And producing more children who have suffered from breathing difficulties, elderly people having to put up with this pollution, and therefore the resultant strain on medical and health services.

Mr Robert LAW :

That's right. But on other point I would like to make, and this might be surprising to you. Whilst we have got some quite obvious significant air pollution problems here, there are many different types of air pollutants and the ones that we suffer from here most often have to be quite visible. But many other major cities in the world, including London and New York, have got higher levels of certain air pollutants than we have. It's just that those forms of air pollution are not so visible.

Programme host :

But we are a pretty small place, something like seven million people, it would not be too difficult perhaps to prevent cars from coming into the busy areas, for example, by not allowing any cars with odd numbers at the end of their license plates to enter on certain days of the week, something like that.

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, that have certainly been done in some cities in the world when the air pollution level gets to the danger level. We haven't actually that position yet.

Programme host :

Why don't we stop it before it gets to that level ?

Mr Robert LAW :

Well, that's certainly something for our transport colleagues to think about. But, as I say, we certainly haven't got anywhere near to the danger level yet.

Programme host :

Do you press your transport colleagues to perhaps re-think this whole thing ?

Mr Robert LAW :

We are working with our transport colleagues on a number of initiatives, including the pedestrianization scheme that the Chief Executive announced late last year, and they are pressing ahead with those as quickly as they can get them in place.

Programme host :

Mr LAW, thank you very much indeed.

* * * * *