

Chamber joins PCB burn opposition

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

The Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce has joined the opposition to proposed PCB incineration at Rollins as part of a new environmental organization formed to fight the PCB proposal and other environmental problems in the parish, Mayor Screen announced Wednesday.

The private group, which Screen was instrumental in forming, includes representatives from the Chamber, the AFL-CIO, state and local government

and environmental groups. "There has to be an answer to the disposal of PCBs", said Chamber executive Bill Little. "But we're not willing to take a chance on a company in whom the public has less than complete confidence."

One of the big problems the area faces is that it knows so little about what toxic chemicals are in the air, said John deGravelles, a local attorney who heads Citizens for a Clean Environment. Screen appointed deGravelles acting chairman of the new organization, the Baton Rouge Council for

Environmental Quality. The testing of what is in the air and what is coming out of individual stacks is "so inadequate," he said. The new organization hopes to increase public awareness of the problem, he said. The group also will try to improve state and local environmental laws to make it easier to stop things like the proposed Rollins PCB burn and to make it possible for the state to do something about ozone pollution, which has caused Baton Rouge air to be rated unhealthy on a number of occasions.

"The data suggests that there is every reason for us to be concerned about environmental health effects in Louisiana," said State Sen. Tommy Hudson, one of the charter members of the group. Pollution in Louisiana is not only a health issue, but an economic development issue as well, Hudson said. People don't want to move their companies to Louisiana if they have to fear for their own health or that of their employees, he said. Screen advised Rollins to reconsider their PCB application, since it has become obvious that the community is solidly against the project.

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Report won't change plan, says EPA

By PAT REMICK
UPI regional reporter

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A scientific advisory board's call for more research will not change the government's plans to move ahead with proposing regulations to govern at-sea incineration of toxic wastes, an EPA official said Wednesday.

Alan Rubin, an Environmental Protection Agency programs specialist, said the proposed regulations already had been drawn up and were under review by the Office of Management and Budget when the Science Advisory Board approved its non-binding report Tuesday in New Orleans.

The Science Advisory Board, a panel of scientists that advises the EPA, basically said that, while incineration is a necessary alternative to landfill for dealing with the 240 million metric tons of hazardous waste generated annually, more research is needed to develop, or improve, regulations for chemical incineration on both land and sea.

"After the regulations are out for public comment and said report is reviewed by the public and an incineration study being done by the agency now is completed, the public will have an opportunity to suggest to the agency how the results of the study should impact upon the regulations," he said.

The scientific report, an in-house EPA study and the regulations are part of a three-pronged program developed to deal with the controversial issue after a huge outcry led to the overturning of a temporary decision to issue permits for the Vulcanus incineration ships to load toxic wastes in Alabama and burn them about 200

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Environmentalists have criticized the EPA for proceeding with the proposed regulations before the studies were completed. Rubin said the proposed rules could be available for public review by next month but the in-house study will not be completed until February.

The science board, in its report to be formally submitted to the EPA next month, recommends the agency further study the constituents of incineration emissions, how they move through the environment and their toxicity.

The report said the federal agency does not know whether there are hazardous chemicals released during burning because the EPA's and the industry's testing systems are inadequate. Although the report was written at the request of the EPA, the recommendations are not binding on the agency.

"I definitely agree with the first statement that techniques of destruction such as incineration are definitely preferable to storing them in the ground," said Rubin. "I would agree that additional information would be helpful for improving the regulations for land and ocean incineration, but I don't think that

it is necessary to sacrifice the continuing or immediate development of incineration programs within the agency," he said.

Rubin said carefully monitored test burns of hazardous wastes are necessary to study the effects of burning toxic wastes beyond the modeling and mathematical estimates already completed on how the chemicals will react to the environment.

Some opponents say the prospects of an ocean accident or the production of far more dangerous byproducts from burning should preclude any incineration at sea.

"We do not know every last individual compound that comes out of incineration," said Rubin. "But as a matter of fact, we don't know every last one from a wood-burning stove or what comes out of the tailpipe of my '78 Ford."

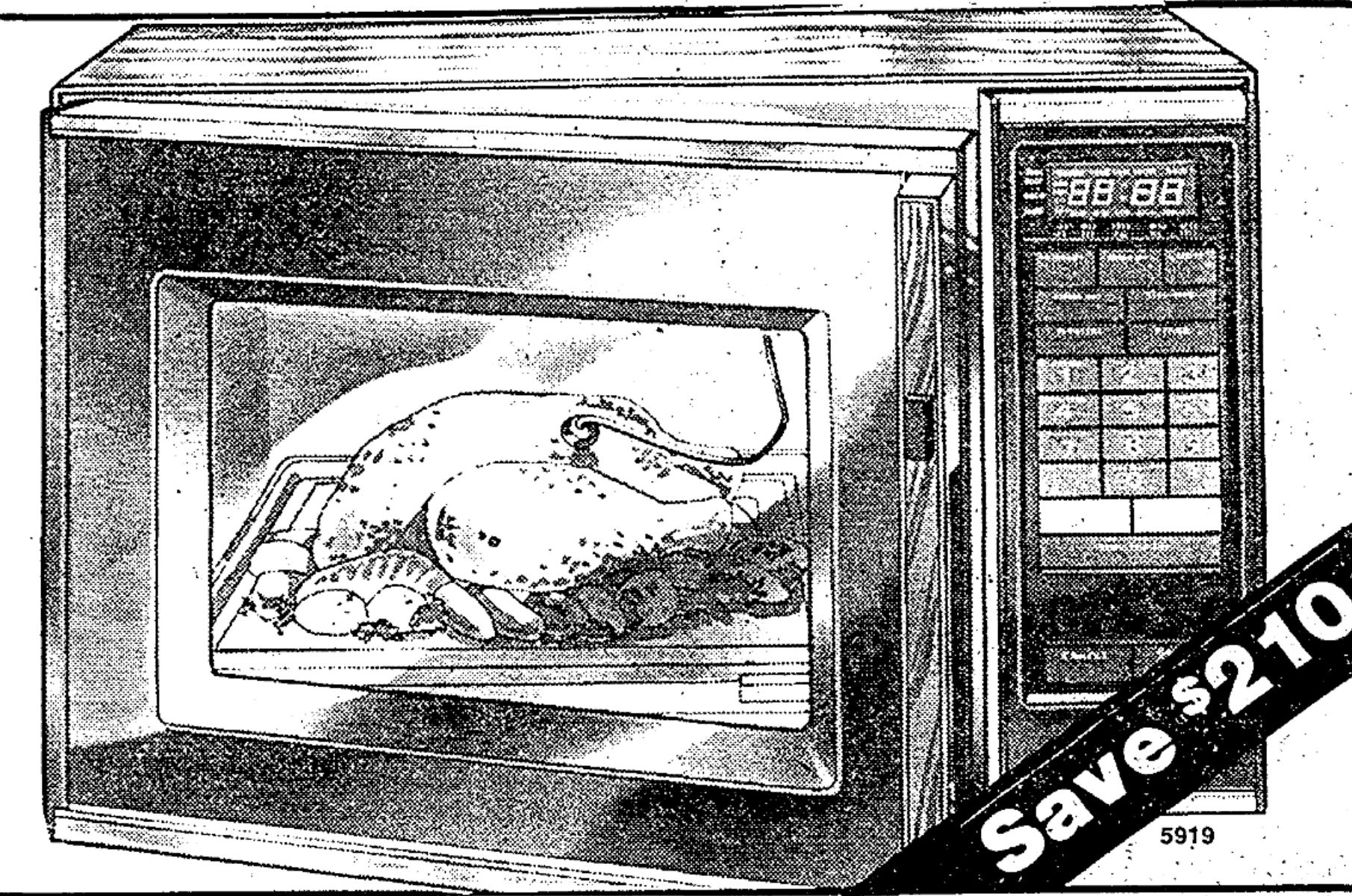
However, he said the EPA has conducted 15 years of research on incineration and studied the byproducts of the most dangerous chemicals, concluding that there is "very, very little" environmental risk — particularly if the burning is done far from population centers.

Janitor pleads innocent

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A janitor was ordered held without bail after pleading innocent to charges of arson and murder stemming from a fatal \$1 million blaze at the restaurant where he worked.

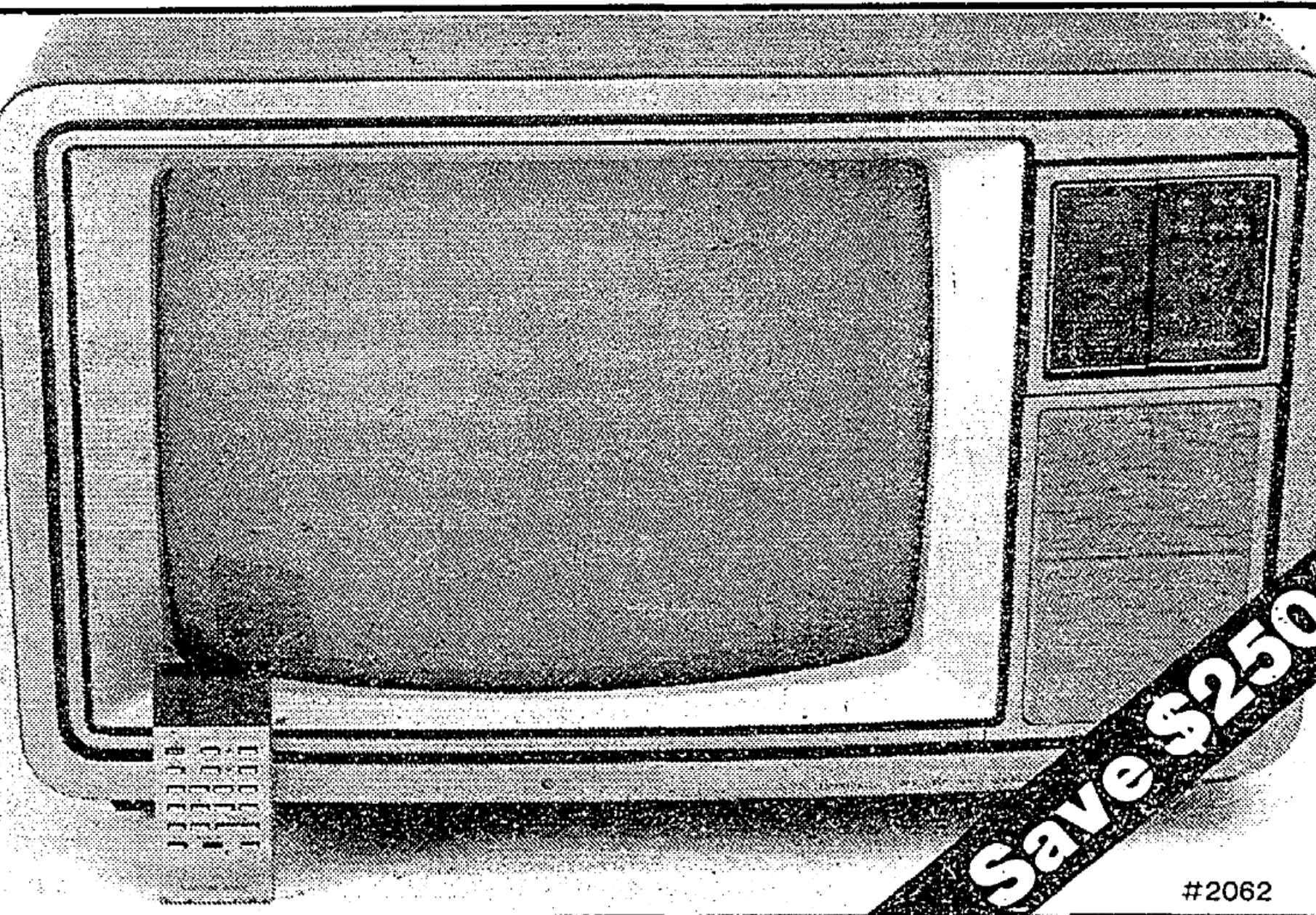
"He was the last known employee in the restaurant prior to the fire," police Officer Rod Benson said of Jose Jesus Davila who appeared in court Tuesday. A preliminary hearing was set Dec. 24, a court clerk said.

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