

PR Man Helps Select Author of Book on Pollution Case

The first week after New Year's Frank D. Schaumburg, head of the civil engineering department at Oregon State University, created a stir in Minnesota while there promoting his new book *Judgment Reserved: A Landmark Environmental Case*. The book is about the 8 years of state and federal abatement proceedings and decisions having to do with the Reserve Mining Company's daily discharge of 67,000 tons of tailings into Lake Superior from its taconite plant at Silver Bay.

In a series of public appearances in the Twin Cities and northern Minnesota, Schaumburg came on strong as a critic and debunker of the environmentalists and public officials who have insisted on stopping the tailings discharge. He said that there is no clear-cut evidence that Reserve is polluting the lake or creating a health hazard and no assurance that disposal of the tailings on land as ordered by the federal courts will not lead to more harm than good. And, as the Minneapolis *Tribune* has reported it, Schaumburg's remarks at a press conference in St. Paul on 3 January brought an outburst from Grant Merritt, a local attorney who was formerly director of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Schaumburg was saying that he was able to write a fair, balanced account of the Reserve Mining case because, unlike Merritt and other "so-called environmentalists," he was not "hung up emotionally" on the issue. At this, Merritt spoke up heatedly, denouncing the book—which includes a foreword by Frederick Seitz, president of the Rockefeller University and past president of the National Academy of Sciences—as a "gross distortion" and a "white-wash for Reserve."

During the press conference, Schaumburg, who gives every appearance of candor, acknowledged that a public relations consultant for the Armco Steel Corporation—which, along with Republic Steel, owns and controls Reserve—had a role in the book's publication.

Science has learned from interviews with the three parties involved—Schaumburg, the Armco consultant, and the book's publisher—just how it was that the book project was proposed to Schaumburg some 2½ years ago.

The first player on stage was Fred Easter, executive editor of Reston Publishing Company, a subsidiary of Prentice-Hall (a major publisher based at Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey) located near Washington at Reston, Virginia. Easter was exploring the prospects for arranging prepublication sales commitments for a book on the Reserve Mining case, which in the spring of 1974 was much in the news because of U.S. District Judge Miles W. Lord's order shutting down the Silver Bay plant as a public health menace (an order soon lifted on appeal).

On the chance that Armco might agree to buy a substantial number of copies of a book about the Reserve Mining case, Easter had called at the Washington office of Burson-Marsteller, a big public relations firm that represents both Armco and Reserve. Carl Levin, one of the firm's vice presidents and senior consultants, told Easter that, yes, Armco might well wish to make a substantial prepublication purchase, but only if the author chosen to do the book had good credentials and would do an honest, objective book, written "straight down the middle."

Well, it so happened that Easter already had in mind

somebody he thought Levin might like: Frank Schaumburg. Although Easter had never met Schaumburg, he had been impressed by an article that Schaumburg had written for the *National Observer* entitled "Enviropolitics Is a Pollutant Too," which held that the 1972 Water Pollution Control Act was an unsound piece of legislative handiwork by scientifically naive lawyers and politicians.

After being shown this article, Levin, too, was impressed, and he called Schaumburg to talk about the book possibility. But, inasmuch as Levin did not mention Prentice-Hall or Reston, Schaumburg thought the steel company would sponsor the book project, and this made him uneasy. But he was pleased to share with Levin his ideas about environmental management and he sent him reprints of some of his scholarly work. Later, after talking with his dean, Schaumburg informed Levin that, if he wrote a book on the Reserve case, he would want to do it under contract with a recognized independent publisher. Shortly thereafter, Easter proposed that he do the book for Reston.

Neither before nor after signing the book contract did Schaumburg inquire as to what, if any, agreement Reston might have with Armco. Yet the facts were that, if Schaumburg wrote the book, Armco was going to buy 1000 copies—a tenth of the first printing.

Easter says that prepublication agreements of this kind are common in book publishing. But, if they are, it has somehow escaped the notice of others who are presumably knowledgeable about what constitutes usual or accepted practice. Although preferring not to comment on the situation involving the Schaumburg book as such, Townsend Hoopes, president of the Association of American Publishers, says, "It is not usual practice in publishing, when the book deals with a controversial issue, to have one side of the case subsidize publication." And, in his opinion, a large prepublication sales agreement of the kind involved here constitutes a subsidy.

Schaumburg looks upon the agreement as merely a business detail which did not involve him and which should not have a bearing on how his book is received. In his view, all that matters is the objectivity and quality of the book itself. Acceptance of the manuscript for publication was not subject to Armco's approval, and, according to Schaumburg, the manuscript underwent no substantive changes whatever after he submitted it to Reston. "I think the book is very well balanced," he says. "I would certainly subject it to the most intense criticism of my technical peers."

The book received some favorable press notice in Minnesota while Schaumburg was on his promotional tour, but, as Grant Merritt's outburst suggests, people who have helped the government make its case against Reserve either in an enforcement or research capacity tend to regard it as hopelessly biased in the company's favor. For example, Gary Glass, a scientist at the National Water Quality Laboratory at Duluth who has testified for the government, says, "Schaumburg's conclusions are completely off the mark."

Here, it is enough to say, without speaking to the book's merits, that anyone reading it should bear in mind that an Armco consultant had a key role in selecting its author and that the Armco purchase agreement entered into the decision to publish it.—LUTHER J. CARTER