

DNM Must Fulfill Its Duties and Centralize Information

LAPAZ: "THE METEOROLOGY OFFICE IS BEING IGNORED BY DINAMA IN BOTNIA"

Senator GUSTAVO LAPAZ demanded that Uruguay's National Meteorology Office (DNM, as per acronym in Spanish) "play its role regarding Botnia's activities and install a station at Fray Bentos, at the same time that it centralizes all the information about any movements at the mill concerning the DNM."

LAPAZ is the Vice President of the Environment Commission which was visited this week by the Meteorology Director, Brig. Gral. (R) Ariel Pérez Rivella, who confessed in connection with the installation of the Botnia mill "I know more of it as a citizen than as Meteorology Director" because he believed that the environment issue "is not within the specific duties of the DNM."

METEOROLOGY OFFICE IGNORED

LAPAZ insisted that "the Director's words show that the Meteorology Office was not consulted by the MVOTMA (Spanish acronym for the Housing, Cadastre and Environment Ministry) about Botnia's doings to date, and that Law 17,296 of January, 2001 has not been complied with or abided by."

Further, Pérez admitted that efforts such as "in-depth studies of another kind in which the meteorological factor is relevant" have been placed "IN A RECESS"; they need to be restated (...), NO sampling or analysis of contaminating elements, typical of environmental investigation, ARE BEING CARRIED OUT.

PRIVATE STATION AT BOTNIA

LAPAZ said that "nowadays there is a station, owned by the company, in the plant, which sends over its results to DINAMA directly; thus, both of them are ignoring the Meteorology Office, which is the only OFFICIAL agency in Uruguay. That is why the station needs to be independent from Botnia and to take part in environmental monitoring. In the meantime it can be accepted as a TEMPORARY SOLUTION, as long as it is operated

by Meteorology Office officials under an agreement with the Ministry of Defense.”

The DNM has a station at Young, in Río Negro, and another one nearer, in Mercedes. The SENATOR considered there should be yet another one in F. Bentos, providing official control of the atmosphere –temperature, air, water, direction and strength of the wind. This means thorough surveillance of the pulp mill and of the vital elements in its environment, all of which has been clearly provided for by Law.

As regards the sodium sulphur leakage on August 14, and whether the DNM was consulted about the wind speed, the Director’s answer leads us to think that the Director was not approached and that the Mercedes station could have been approached directly by DINAMA. This, however, did not happen, according to GUSTAVO LAPAZ.