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pg. 50

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A \$63 million, seven-block-long pollution-control plant to be built in the Hudson River is nearing design completion and has set off a controversy among the city's planners and administrators. The plant, a major element in the billion-dollar clean-up of the river, will cover 2.5 acres.

The offshore treatment facilities, to be built under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department, will project 500 feet into the water from 137th Street to 144th Street. It will be visible from the heights of both New York and New Jersey, interrupting the view from George Washington Bridge.

Critics say the design is not suitable to the location. They speak of potential landscape damage and lack of relationship to long-range reclamation objectives for the Hudson shore, and an absence of collaboration between city departments to help realize those aims.

The plant will be one of the chief parts in the city's construction of antipollution facilities, which have been under way for some time and are well on schedule with the dates set last week by the Federal Government for the Hudson River program.

Final plans for the river facility will be submitted to the Mayor's office by next June, with construction to begin in November, 1966, and completion expected by December, 1970.

Need Is Acknowledged

There is no controversy about the necessity of the plant, the correctness of its site or the quality of its technical design.

Experts agree this is the optimum location for Hudson River facilities. Three firms of architects and engineers have collaborated on a satisfactory functional solution that meets the standards of the Interstate Sanitation Commission, a regulatory body that combines the antipollution efforts of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The collaborating firms are Feld & Timoney, Gibbs & Hill, and Tippetts, Abnett, McCarthy & Strafton.

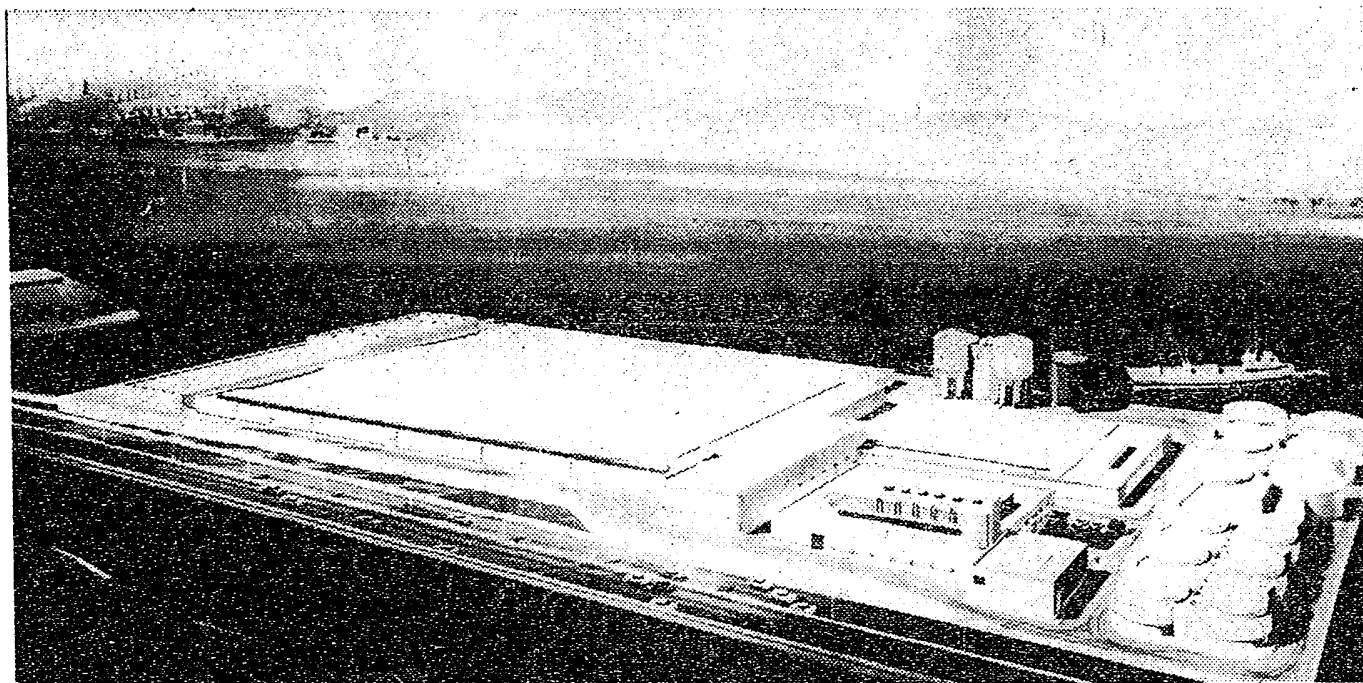
Nevertheless, regional and planning experts consider the plant a blow to the ultimate objective of the antipollution campaign: eventual reclamation of the Hudson River and of the city's waterfront for residential and recreational purposes. Critics call it an exchange of one form of pollution for another.

The Regional Plan Association, in its forthcoming newsletter on "Planning the Hudson," asserts that "as presently designed the facility could damage the appearance of the river, which, paradoxically, it is intended to improve."

Dual-Purpose Design Urged

It is contended that this substantial projection into the Hudson should have been conceived as a dual-purpose structure, with its 2.5 acres of top surface utilized as park or recreation area to extend such facilities along the river at a place where they are most urgently needed. This would also minimize landscape damage.

The site is at a point where waterfront park is interrupted by a deep ravine with mixed,



A rendering of the sewage treatment plant to be built on the Hudson River between 137th and 144th Streets

blighting uses, west of Harlem, where the present lack of recreational opportunities is critical.

Planners fear that the huge industrial treatment plant reverses rather than implements the waterfront policy recently laid down by the City Planning Commission.

This policy calls for gradual elimination of obsolete commercial and industrial waterfront uses for goods and services where these functions are diminishing and deteriorating, and restoration of the waterfront to social and human activity—housing, parks, playgrounds, promenades and views.

According to the Regional Plan Association, the future of

the New York-New Jersey waterfront hangs in the balance. Railroad lighterage tonnage in the New York port has decreased 70 per cent in 17 years; pier use is shifting to Brooklyn; railroad yards are being abandoned or combined; four of 14 large New Jersey industrial firms have departed, with two more scheduled to go.

Large land acreage is becoming available for development on both sides of the river, with more than half a dozen large-scale new projects in process or consideration for Manhattan alone, totaling over \$400 million in cost.

All this is viewed by the Regional Plan Association in the

larger context of conservation and proper uses for the entire Hudson River, an issue currently under study. A state-appointed commission is researching the problem and several conservation bills are pending in Congress.

Investigation of the design of the pollution-control plant indicates that none of these changes or long-range objectives have figured in it. It is simply another industrial facility added to the river and in this case placed out in it, since shore land is not available.

Research reveals the failure to consider this facility in long-range terms as one more miscalculation in a lengthening list

of breakdowns in interdepartmental collaboration. The neglect of cooperative planning for over-all policies has led to limited decisions that are being increasingly attacked as permanent mistakes in the city's physical development.

According to one team of architects and engineers involved with the project, initial studies proposed that landscaping and recreation be made part of the new structure, which is only 15 feet above the waterline for its seven-block length, with immense expanses of flat rooftop.

The recommendation was specifically for the extension of desirable waterfront use rather than just the addition of a sani-

tary facility. Costs would have been considerably less than for the acquisition of park by land purchase. At that stage, technical problems such as access could have been solved without unreasonable difficulty, according to the architects. Discussions broke down at an early stage.

The city agencies involved in the discussions were the Public Works Department and the Parks Department. A contract is necessary between the two to permit the Parks Department to administer recreational facilities on a Public Works building.

A Public Works spokesman made it clear, however, that the department does not traditionally look with favor on dual use.

"We prefer not to combine the plant with a recreation area," he said. "This is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week operation and we don't want any interference with it. There is always danger to the public; doors left open, people entering our facilities, no police supervision. We want to keep our functions separate."

Questioned about the matter, Park Commissioner Newbold Morris said: "We did have some talks with Public Works about it a long time ago, but nothing ever came of it. This is the first thing I've heard about it in years."

Public Works Commissioner Bradford N. Clark recalled: "I spoke with the Parks Department about a year ago concerning the use of the top of the building if they would want the paved area for games—but they didn't seem particularly interested in it."

"We got the roof," he added. "If anyone wants it, God bless them."