

De-Blackening the Skies

U.S. industrial cities, finally, are groping into the smoke problem—a cause of untold damage to health and property.

New York is worst hit. On each square mile of the Big Town, despite smoke control codes, an estimated 112 tons of soot settles each month. These tar, sulphur and ash particles set up nose, throat and lung irritations and often cause pneumonia.

Smaller industrial cities have the same dark problem. Mayor James Bowes of North Adams, Mass., where smoke laws aren't enforced, says industries must be educated in smoke abatement methods before enforcement measures can be carried out.

Burn It Up. Some cities are looking to science. Detroit has found that a third of its soot-fall is combustible and that much of the rest can be eliminated in time. This burnable third represents a waste of 34,000 tons of coal, worth \$225,000 each year.

But even this loss is small compared with the property damage. Sooty sulphur, moistened by humidity, rots carpets, shades, curtains—every textile it touches.

Chicago, whose soot-fall several years ago almost equaled New York's, has reduced it to a "mere" 67 tons per square mile. This was accomplished by making it mandatory to burn highly volatile fuels in mechanical stokers and barring such fuel from household use.

Cleaner Trains. Louisville, Ky., orders railroads running through the city to use smoke-burners (steam jets that blow air over the fire to burn up smoke).

St. Louis, dogged by smog (smoke and fog), "persuaded" business and industry to replace hand-fired heating systems and to repair faulty heating plants. Railroads were told to use Diesel engines and smokeless fuels.

Salt Lake City, Milwaukee, Columbus, Ohio, Pittsburgh and a number of other cities have set up committees to study the smoke problem and strengthen city codes controlling it.