Air Pollution Control Act

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Introduction:

The last century has seen air getting polluted because of explosives used in wars, air pollutants and chemicals coming out of industries, and chlorofluorocarbons, commonly referred to as CFCs, emanating from air conditioners and automobiles polluting the air. In the 21st century, pollution has still not been removed from the air, and there are no signs of it improving. The air pollutants have had an adverse effect on the ozone layer, and because of it, all climate change occurs. World Health Organization (WHO) published research in 2014 stating that over 7 million people throughout the globe had died because of the pollutants present in the air. There is an urgent need to take action and try to clean up, or at the very least, try to control air pollution.

Background of the Act:

The United States of America first took real steps to address environmental conditions by passing a law in the mid-1950s. The law, called the Air Pollution Control Act, was passed to control air pollution. In 1963, the US government took further steps to control the ever-growing air pollution through what became known as the Clean Air Act. There have been many amendments to the Clean Air Act over the years. Just like many other environmental laws and regulations that are managed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act is also administered by the EPA. Local and state governments coordinate with the EPA to implement the Act. This Act, if simply stated, proposes to lessen the pollution in the air and to keep the quality of the atmosphere intact. The Clean Air Act is one of the most elaborate regulations regarding the quality of air around the globe. The law was specifically designed and implemented to curb the release of harmful gases from automobiles, industries, and factories.

Major Amendments in the Act:

Since the start of the Act, there have been quite a few major amendments and provisions over the years. In 1970, there was a program, under the amendments of the Act, that was concerned with the research of what kind of pollutants and sources are affecting and harming the atmosphere. That put limitations on the use of them. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards were created by the EPA to put strict limitations on the sources that were a threat, directly or indirectly, to the atmosphere (Popp,

2003). The EPA categorized the pollutants into two classes. The first category was the pollutants that affected the lives of humans in a direct manner, and the other was those pollutants that were dangerous for the environment and the welfare of the people. Both of these were termed primary and secondary pollutants. It was in 1990 that the Clean Air Act dealt with the pollution that could be seen and observed out in the open atmosphere. Also, the sources of these pollutants are vehicles and industries. Also, the 1990 amendment dealt with acid rain, and it was mainly due to the factories. They were told to reduce the emissions of oxides, especially those of nitrogen and sulphur. A 50% reduction in their emissions was stated in that amendment. It also dealt with the number of CFCs and the hydrocarbons emanating from the spray cans and vehicles, respectively. Industries were told to use the equipment that was best suited for the environment.

Effectiveness of the Act:

Ever since the Act was implemented, there has been an improvement in the quality of air. The pollutants that were affecting the air have now been reduced. Their quantity has been drastically reduced. From the 1970 amendment to 2015, GDP, or gross national product, saw an increase of 246%. There has been a 67% reduction in sulphur dioxide, an 84% reduction in carbon monoxide, and an 85% reduction in lead in the atmosphere. The Act has effectively improved the quality of air (Greenstone, 2002).

Ethical, Social, and Political Issues:

Clean-air laws have lowered the productivity of industries. There has been 4.8 percent lower production and around a 9% decrease in profit. The one political issue associated with the Act was that the Bush administration had put restrictions on every harmful pollutant but did not take any action against the coal industry as he had his political agenda (Kahn & Knittel, 2003). One of the social issues is that transportation will be affected, whether it is in the form of people who cannot afford personal cars or trucking companies that can transport goods. The ethical issue associated with the Act is the way the EPA officials behave with the particular companies, without taking things into consideration, they fine the companies and then sue them, and the court trial happens, which gives a bad image of the company.

Evaluation and Recommendation:

Politically, no single person has the right to legislate the Act according to their own political interests. The research labs have made it easy to evaluate what amount of respective chemicals are allowed, and now companies follow them because the laws are clearer than before. The ethical issue is one area in which the Act needs improvement. One recommendation for the Clean Air Act is to try to focus on the remote areas where industries are located all in the same place. Not many industries should be

present in the same place. That would have a disastrous effect on that particular area.

Conclusion:

The world is experiencing climate change. We need to protect our environment, and in order to do so, we have to abide strictly by the rules that are necessary for the protection and preservation of our atmosphere.

References

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