

# Insight

## Chicago's new lakefront plan may suffer from U.S. Steel's belated plea for expansion

# Landfill: What price progress?

By Dennis Byrne

Chicago's new lakefront plan, Mayor Richard J. Daley proclaimed less than four months ago, was "dramatic proof of the city's continuing determination to do all in its power to protect this great natural asset today and in the future."

But already, the city's determination is about to be put to a dramatic test.

It comes this month when the Chicago Park District board decides whether to permit United States Steel Corp. to fill in 194.6 acres of lake bottom to expand its South Works plant at E. 89th St.

Should the park board turn down the plan, it would please a number of legislators, environmental and planning groups and Atty. Gen. William J. Scott, who charge the landfill would be ecologically damaging and that the \$100 an acre acquisition price that U.S. Steel would pay for the land is a "giveaway."

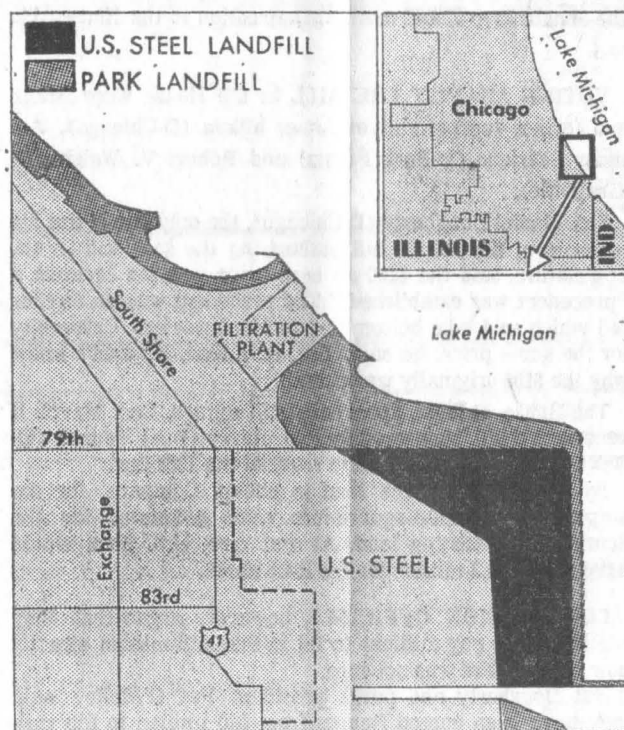
**ALREADY, THE ISSUES** are being couched in the classic terms: Jobs and the need for industrial growth versus the environment; favorable treatment for big business at the expense of the public interest and piecemeal development at the expense of comprehensive planning.

The park board listened to these arguments during a hearing Monday in its lakefront offices when U.S. Steel officials asked that the bottomland be turned over to the state, which in turn would sell it to the company. Some opponents also were there.

A 1963 state law requires only that U.S. Steel pay the \$100 an acre and that the district give up in a quit claim any right it has to the acreage.

U.S. Steel did not exercise its option until last month when it sent a check for \$19,460 to state Treasurer Alan J. Dixon, and announced it would ask the district for the quit claim. When environmentalists found out about the transaction, criticism from them and Scott prompted Dixon to return the check, which U.S. Steel put in an escrow account.

Why is U.S. Steel acting to obtain the lake bottom after a delay of 10 years? Tom Ward, director of public relations for



Map drawn from the Lakefront Plan of Chicago report depicts projected recreational and industrial landfills. But planners say the landfill drawings are only "illustrative" of possibilities.

the corporation, said that the facilities at the structural steel plant, the oldest in Chicago, are becoming obsolete and have to be replaced and expanded.

**LANDS TO THE NORTH**, west and south are built up and mainly residential, so the plant has nowhere to expand but into the lake, Ward said.

The Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, for one,

disagrees, contending that "other locations are available for heavy industry." But when pressed, the council admits it hasn't identified specific alternate sites that could accommodate the steel plant.

Besides the obvious self-interest in the proposal, Ward holds out the promise of added benefits to Chicago.

"Our tax bill would go up because of more facilities," he said.

Exactly how much, Ward was not sure because "we haven't decided on what new facilities there will be."

The expansion also would provide more jobs, especially for South Side minorities, Ward said.

And finally, the expansion "would further guarantee that (the plant) would stay in existence and in a healthy condition economically for years to come," he added.

**IS THAT A HINT** that the plant would be closed and moved elsewhere if the landfill fell through? "We haven't considered it, but it's a possibility because of (the plant's) age," he answered.

Rep. Robert Mann (D-Chicago), among those leading the fight against the landfill, considers those arguments to be "grossly insulting to the public's intelligence."

Because the corporation suddenly came forward with the check for the bottomland after 10 years of waiting while still having no definite plans for what to build on the landfill, Mann is convinced there must be some other reason for U.S. Steel acting now.

The reason may be an attempt to circumvent the city's new lakefront plan and its companion lakefront protection ordinance, according to Mann.

The plan, a set of 14 general policy statements, is designed to provide a guide to the long-range development of the lakefront, with an eye toward protecting the environmental quality of the lake, preventing lakeshore erosion and increasing recreation opportunities. That ordinance was up for City Council action Monday.

**A SECOND LAKEFRONT ORDINANCE** would impose strict city controls on any development proposed for off-

Turn to Page 6, Column 1

# Lakefront landfill: What price progress?

Continued from Page 5

shore waters, public lands adjacent to the waterfront and any private property 330 feet west from there.

There is some question about whether U.S. Steel would be able to circumvent the protection ordinance even if it wanted to. Richard Curry, city corporation counsel, said that U.S. Steel still would be subject to the ordinance unless work got started on the landfill before the ordinance is approved by the City Council.

The measure was shelved last week by a City Council committee for further study.

At any rate, Ward contends that U.S. Steel experts have taken the environmental impact of the landfill under consideration, although he was unable to detail the exact shape of the landfill or the material to be used.

**THE LANDFILL AND THE LAKEFRONT** plan "would marry one another," Ward continued, because of an adjacent recreational landfill proposed for Rainbow Park just to the north.

The general lakefront plan, in fact, does show the industrial landfill and 100 acres of landfill just to the north, but the planners say that the diagrams are only "illustrative."

Mann and other critics charge that the landfill will affect the lake currents, thereby increasing pollution and erosion.

John Armstrong, professor of environmental and water resource engineering at the University of Michigan, wasn't quite so sure.

Armstrong, who was a consultant for the mayor's lakefront plan, said that it would be impossible to determine how the landfill would affect the existing lakefront or any of a number of recreational islands and peninsulas proposed in the plan without a detailed study.

To find out, the city and Armstrong's group, the Great Lakes Resource Management Program at the university, last month applied to the National Science Foundation for a \$300,000 grant for a one-year study.

**THE SITE OF ONE LANDFILL** as opposed to others, the shape of the landfills and the landfill materials all have an impact on currents, erosion and pollution, and none of these matters has been closely studied, he said.

The lakefront plan "is one of the most innovative things in urban design," he said, and approving a single landfill before considering its total impact would be abandoning the city's commitment to develop the lakefront as "a complete system."

There is also the question of the \$100-an-acre price tag. "We didn't choose the price; that was the price set by the state," Ward said.

There didn't seem to be much question in 1963 when the General Assembly approved the price. It breezed through

## Insight

the Senate 53 to 0, and met little opposition in the House, 142 to 4.

**VOTING AGAINST THE BILL** in the House were Mann and former representatives Abner Mikva (D-Chicago), Anthony Scariano (D-Park Forest) and Robert V. Walsh (D-Grayville).

Sen. Daniel Dougherty (D-Chicago), the only one of the six sponsors of the Senate bill authorizing the sale still in the Legislature, said the \$100 an acre price was set because a "precedent was established." The precedent was an earlier bill which sold lake bottomland to Northwestern University for the same price, he said. But, he added, he didn't know why the \$100 originally was chosen.

The House, at least, apparently still agrees. Last March it beat back a bill, sponsored by Rep. Harry (Bus) Yourell (D-Oak Park), which would have revoked the 1963 law.

By any standard, the land is cheap. Compare, for example, the 50-cent-a-square-foot value estimated for the South Works existing land. At that rate, U.S. Steel would have to pay \$4.2 million for the 194.6 acres.

**CORPORATION OFFICIALS**, however, argue that they would have to pay millions to fill in the bottomland; exactly how much, Ward was not sure.

But Dougherty and parks president Pat O'Malley said they have been quoted figures from \$20 million to \$50 million.

At any rate, the landfill has been upheld by the Illinois Supreme Court, steel company officials note. But it's not that simple, according to Mann and Scott's office. The case objecting to the U.S. Steel plan was lost because the court ruled that the plaintiff had no standing to bring suit since he was a private citizen who failed to show that he would suffer any special injury as a result of the landfill.

However, in a later case, unrelated to the landfill, the court reversed itself and said that private citizens do have a right to sue over how public land is used.

That would be the basis for a new challenge of the 1963 law, which Scott's office is studying, and which Mann promises to bring if the district hands over the land.

**BUT U.S. STEEL MAY** also be laying the groundwork for a suit if the park board fails to approve the quit claim. Monday's testimony, Edward C. Logelin, the corporation's Midwest vice president, said the Park District, under state law, has no choice but to give up its rights to the property. The State Legislature has previously decided to give the state title to the land, and the Park District, as a political subdivision of the state, has only a "ministerial right to play," he said.

Mann, however, contends that there is nothing in state law requiring the Park District to act even if the state accepts the \$19,460 from U.S. Steel.

But even if the park board approves a quit claim for the land, it would only be the start of a rocky road for U.S. Steel. Approval for the landfill would be required from numerous agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. Many public hearings would be required.

Is there then, a chance of a compromise?

O'Malley hinted at it when he said in an interview that the Park District might require U.S. Steel to fill in "12 or so acres of park land" if the board grants the approval. Ward also said "there is the possibility we would contribute landscaping and beautification. But it hasn't been decided."

But Mann rejected the possible compromise. "I don't like this principle of giving away lakefront property on a trade-off for more fill, which means taking away more lakefront from the people. It's bad public policy."

## Opposition urges Allende to resign

**SANTIAGO, Chile (UPI)** — Provincial leaders of Chile's largest opposition political party called Sunday for the resignation of President Salvador Allende to end massive, middle-class strikes across the country.

Provincial chiefs of the Christian Democratic Party issued the plea as more and more Chileans went on strike, critically curtailing food

supplies in this nation of 10 million and bringing the economy to a virtual halt.

Chile's 8,000 engineers went on strike Monday to join growing protest against Allende's three-year-old Marxist government.

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*President* *East Chicago* *W3*  
Statement of Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council  
Chicago Park District  
Monday, September 10, 1973 10:00 A.M. *34 Ill 2d 495*

*Chairman*  
Mr. O'Malley and members of the Chicago Park District:

My name is William Bowe. I am appearing on behalf of the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, a non-partisan, non-profit citizen organization. The Council includes a broad cross section of the civic, business, and professional leadership of Chicago, and for almost forty years it has been actively involved in the struggle to make Chicago a better place to live and work.

The most unique and most important attribute of Chicago's attractiveness to people and business, without question, is Lake Michigan and its shoreline.

It is altogether unthinkable that any real estate on the lakefront owned by the people of Chicago and under the control of the Chicago Park District should be sold, transferred or conveyed to any private corporation.

The request of United States Steel Corporation for the conveyance of 194.6 acres of now-submerged land along the lakefront, ten years after arrangements for such a transfer were initiated, cannot be justified in any way as serving the public interest. There is ample alternative land available for industrial use. The commendable action of the Park District Board on August 13 in approving in principle the 14 Basic Policies for the Chicago Lakefront and the Lakefront Protection Ordinance clearly dictate a rejection of U. S. Steel's request.

*Truly*  
The Preamble to the proposed Lakefront Protection Ordinance notes with pride that "No other Great Lake city has shown the same kind of concern or initiative to achieve, preserve and develop its Lakefront potential for aesthetic and recreational purposes. . ." Basic Policy No. 1 is to "complete the publicly owned and locally controlled park system along the entire Chicago lakefront."

*The Lakefront Protection Ordinance itself states that it is being adopted for the purpose of insuring that the lake is devoted only to public purposes.*

*and was referred to by Mr. Hagelin.*

- 2 -

Capitulation of the Park District to the pending request would make a fiasco of the Lakefront Policies recently adopted by the Park District. It would be a mockery of its responsibility and integrity for the leadership of the Park District to be the first to scuttle <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>policy</sup> ~~very~~ policy.

There is another point we would like to raise that concerns the proposed Lakefront Plan. Specifically we refer to the schematic rendering of the sector South of 79th Street, (which appears opposite page 34 of the Lakefront Plan of Chicago). This illustration suggests that U. S. Steel Corporation might relinquish their claim to a portion of the submerged land on the East in exchange for other submerged land adjacent to their present property.

Was this plan prepared with the knowledge of the Chicago Park District? What conversations, if any, have been carried on with U. S. Steel in regard to this matter by the City of Chicago or the Park District? Has some bargain been struck without the public's knowledge which would subvert the newly articulated but long-standing policies designed to preserve the entire Chicago lakefront for the people? We believe the public is entitled to know the facts and what is behind this schematic rendering.

No possible trade-off with U. S. Steel would do anything other than undermine the public's right to a halt to non-public development of the lakefront.

This will be the most momentous decision in the history of planning in Chicago. It will set a precedent for all lakefront planning in the future. The people of Chicago must not be ill-served by a decision of the Chicago Park District that would trade off the public interest for a private gain.

The Attorney General of the State of Illinois has reinforced the Park District's position in protecting the public interest in this matter. There is no need for hasty action.

The Park District must inform itself fully of all of the implications of this decision; what the city has in mind for the lakefront and how the people of Chicago feel about it. The Metropolitan Planning and Housing Council urges that the Park District stand firm and refuse to transfer any lakefront land in its trust to private ownership or control.

Thank you.