

8 Casper Star-Tribune Friday, June 25, 1971

# Bentonite Producers Launch Organization

Bentonite producers, concerned with the "adverse publicity from environmentalists," launched a national organization in Casper Thursday in conjunction with the annual convention of the Wyoming Mining Association.

J. W. Roberts, general manager of Benton Clay Co. of Mills, west of Casper, was elected president pro tem of the group, which will represent all bentonite producers in the U. S.

Most of them are located in Wyoming, Montana and South Dakota.

Other officers are Al Harding of Kaycee Bentonite, Casper, vice president pro tem,

and David Auer, Billings, secretary-treasurer. Auer is with Wyo Ben Products.

Roberts said the bentonite firms—contrary to some published remarks — "are concerned with the welfare of our workers and have spent substantial funds to provide safe and healthy working conditions." These expenditures, he said, are continuing.

Roberts was critical of "scare stories" on silica.

"In order for one to get silicosis the literature indicates that airborne dust must contain free silica below five microns in size," he pointed out.

"Quite often, ordinary field dust contains more free silica than many bentonites."

Roberts noted that Wyoming produces 70 per cent or more of the free world's bentonite. Major uses include pelletizing material for taconite, foundry molds, drilling muds. Among a wide range of uses, the versatile clay provides a binder in insulation materials.



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