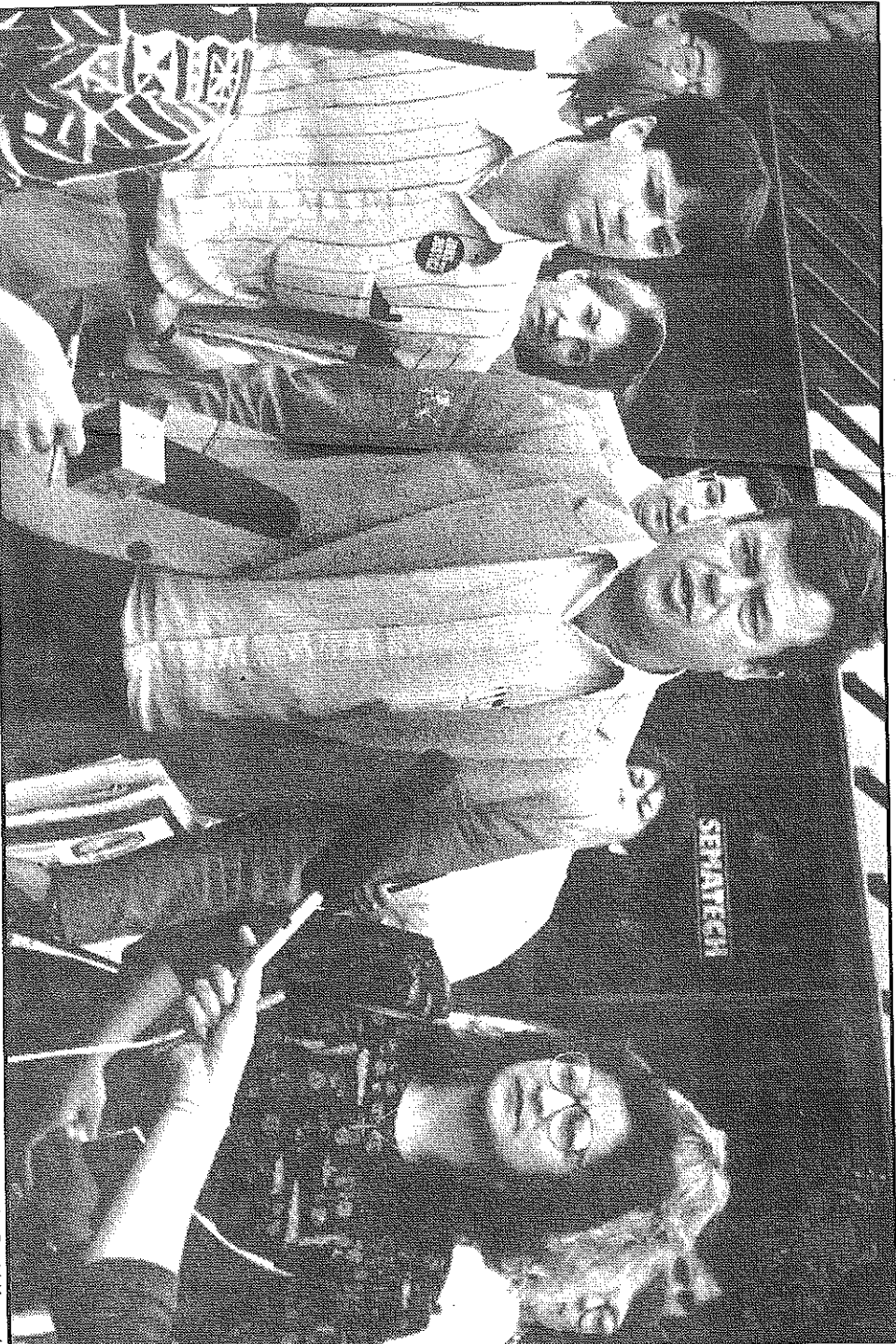


BUSINESS

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Staff photo by David Kennedy

Ted Smith, center, executive director of Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, meets with reporters Friday after talking to Sematech officials about environmental, safety and hiring concerns. With him are

Rand Wilson and Susana Almanza of the Campaign for Responsible Technology. Sematech agreed to talk with Montopolis community leaders about creating a policy that addresses these issues.

Striving to be a 'good neighbor'

By Kirk Ladendori
American-Statesman Staff

Officials at Sematech met Friday with a group of environmental, labor and community activists who hailed the get-together as the start of a new dialogue on social issues between the high-tech industry and social groups.

Activists said Sematech agreed to talk with Montopolis community leaders on the creation of a "good neighbor policy" that would include minority hiring, environmental and worker safety issues.

Austin community organizer Susana Almanza said her group, the Campaign for Responsible Technology, wants more information on Sematech's hiring of minority workers. A survey of the Montopolis neighborhood, she said, showed only one person who knew someone working at the consortium.

Ted Smith, director of the Silicon Val-

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ley Toxics Coalition, called the meeting "a good first step" toward reducing the use of toxic materials in chip manufacturing.

"We see that Sematech is uniquely situated to develop the next generation of safe technology," Smith said, adding he would like to see the chip industry move away from using any toxic materials.

"Sematech is in a position to develop technologies that are not continuing us on that toxic treadmill," he said. "They've already made some progress and we think there's a lot more progress that can be made."

Consortium officials said they met with the activist group, gave them a tour of Sematech, provided them with information

about its operations and agreed to give a written response to detailed questions.

Sematech spokesman Miller Bonner said the consortium is gradually reducing the dependence on some toxic materials through helping to develop a new generation of chip-making equipment.

For example, he said, Sematech worked with Eaton Corp. to develop new ion implant equipment that uses solid arsenic rather than much more toxic arsene gas.

It is also insisting on more safety features in equipment and on stringent training for handling of toxic materials.

Bonner said some of the group's requests, including more meetings with Montopolis area residents, will be easy to meet. Others will be more difficult.

Sematech, he said, does not dictate policy to its members on environmental issues or anything else. Its function is to help its members regain the world's lead in chip-making technology.