Enemies and Friends of Sustainability in the Aluminium Industry – Which one are you?

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Abstract

Gone are the days when one company could solve the challenges facing our industry on our own. In times gone by, institutions such as Pechiney guarded their secrets jealously. But now we see companies such as Alcoa and Rio Tinto working together to create Elysis. It is indicative of the way we now need to approach challenges such as technology and climate change and our footprint on the world.

We see all sorts of strategic alliances between aluminium companies and car companies for instance, but those are competitive at their heart. Now that Arconic is owned by a company that makes plastic, will we see a multi-material approach to solutions?

On the other hand, marketing and public relations people continue to befuddle the public with their bewildering array of product names and product definitions in the green aluminum space. Some use Scope 1 only, some Scopes 1 and 2, others don't say. They blend primary with secondary and call it something else. Will the industry be led by the "good people", or will it be led by the marketing and public relations people?

China with 60 % of the world's primary metal has migrated millions of tonnes of capacity to Yunnan province, but only because the electricity price was much cheaper. Now that metal has a chance of claiming a green premium, they are rolling out their green credentials. The future will always have China in it, and with companies such as Hongqiao actively pursuing their own inert anode, China can be part of the solution.

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