

News briefs

MORE THAN 90 percent of the dioxin in waste oil sprayed at Times Beach, Mo., in the early 1970s has been destroyed by sunlight, according to Monsanto Fellow Jerry M. Schroy. Studies by Schroy and his associates, including field work still under way at Times Beach, demonstrate that dioxin in soil gradually migrates to the surface where the sun's ultraviolet rays break it down ultimately into carbon dioxide and water vapor. Schroy said that the remaining dioxin at Times Beach could be brought to within acceptable levels in "three or four years" if it were dug up and spread in a two-inch thick layer that was turned over two or three times a year. Schroy has shared his findings with state officials and experts from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

A PROGRAM to upgrade and improve Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Company's sulfuric acid unit at the Everett, Mass., plant should be completed by the end of this year, according to Plant Manager Fred Thompson. The unit serves customers in the paper, detergent, fertilizer and pickling industries, says Thompson, and its upgrading reflects "Monsanto's commitment to the sulfuric market and our customers."

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Judge says no proof for Agent Orange claims

Available scientific evidence does not support Vietnam veterans' claims that Agent Orange caused medical problems for them or their families, says the federal judge presiding over settlement of a lawsuit veterans brought against Monsanto Company and six other firms.

Judge Jack B. Weinstein also says the U.S. government probably knew about potential Agent Orange dangers when it used the defoliant in Vietnam.

The Brooklyn, N.Y., judge's opinions are included in a 456-page order tentatively approving settlement of a class action suit brought by Vietnam veterans against Monsanto and six other manufacturers of Agent Orange.

The out-of-court settlement was reached in May when the seven companies involved agreed to pay \$180 million to Vietnam veterans and their families.

Even though he calls it "likely" that

the veterans would have lost if the case had gone to trial, Weinstein calls the chemical companies' payments fair.

"Even though the evidence presented to the court to date suggests the case is without merit, many of those who testified indicated that they sought its prosecution not for money, but for public vindication.

"It is likely that further expenditure of time and money will not be productive," the judge says. "It is time to bring this dispute to a close."

The veterans blame the dioxin in Agent Orange for a variety of health problems. In his order, Weinstein says those claims cannot be medically proven.

"The critical problem for the plaintiffs is to establish that the relatively small quantities of dioxin to which service persons were exposed in Vietnam caused their present disabilities," the judge says. "Here adequate

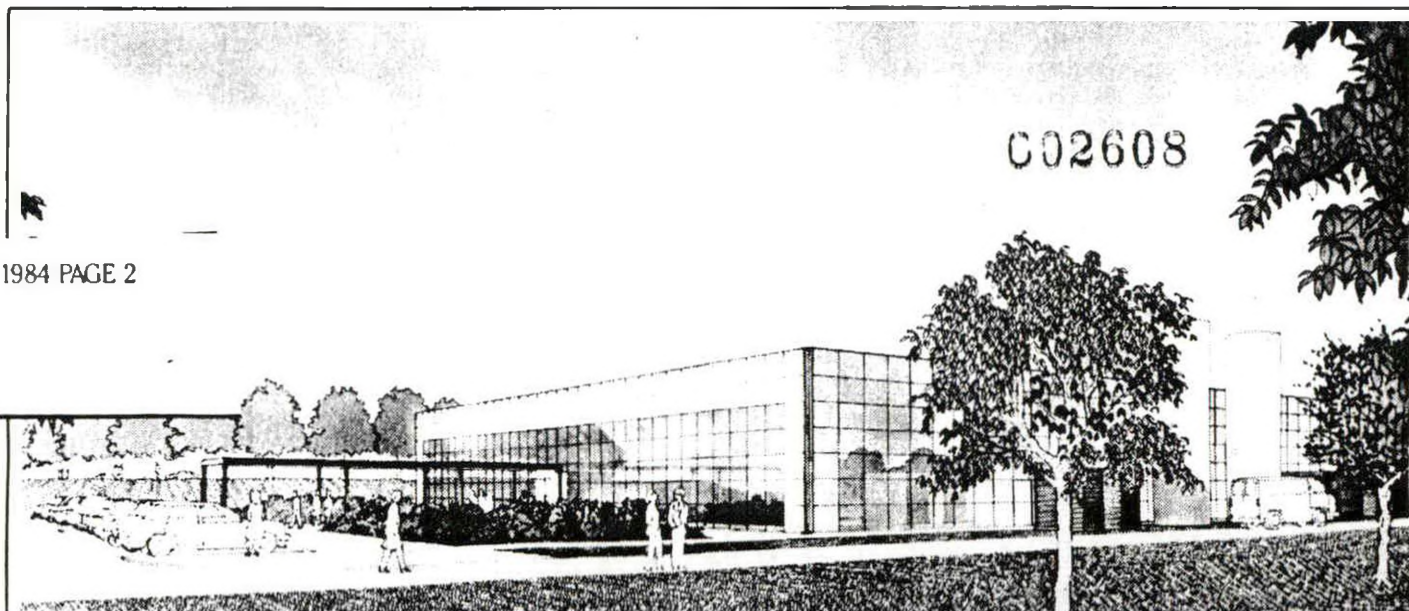
proof is lacking."

In another part of the document, Weinstein contends the U.S. government knew about potential problems encountered in the manufacture of 2,4,5-T, a component of Agent Orange, as early as 1952, nearly a decade before the herbicide was used in Vietnam.

In late 1961, he says, President John F. Kennedy approved limited-scale defoliant operations in Vietnam. "The decision made at these high levels provides a basis for the argument that the government, in its discretion, knowingly assumed the risks."

Evidence indicates, Weinstein says, that "the government's knowledge of (potential hazards) was probably as great as that of the manufacturers."

Still to be approved by Weinstein is the amount paid to plaintiffs' attorneys and a plan to distribute the remainder of the funds. □



If you will be out of town or can't get to the polls because of illness, you can vote by absentee ballot in the Nov. 6 general election in the United States.

If you are registered, you can cast an absentee ballot in person at the office