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Regulation Complaints Popular

WASHINGTON (NEA) — Bitter complaints about oversealous federal regulations have become a popular item within the business community. But too often ignored are the corporate excesses that require government control in the public interest.

One current case in point involves the Monsanto Co., a St. Louis-based firm that has embarked upon a multimillion-dollar propaganda campaign to counter "an irrational, anti-chemical mood (that seems to be sweeping the country."

Monsanto has good reason to be concerned about that purported threat because it is one of the nation's largest producers of industrial chemicals. "Our industry, our company, our jobs are at stake," the company says in a slick brochure.

"The public is being fed a daily diet of bad chemical news in newspapers and magazines. On radio and television," claims that booklet. "The message comes through loud and clear: 'Chemicals are dangerous.'"

While "not opposed to government regulation," Monsanto warns: "Banning possibly harmful chemicals is only one way the government can cripple our industry. Over regulation is just as serious a threat."

In an effort to influence public opinion, Monsanto has launched a "Chemical Facts of Life" program with a budget of $1.2 million last year and $4.5 million this year.

That money will pay for television commercials with "emotional impact," magazine ads aimed at "thought-leaders," a documentary movie, traveling exhibits and "a huge cadre of Monsanto employees giving speeches at every level."

But the publicity blitz has barely mentioned polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) — a highly toxic, extremely persistent family of industrial chemicals produced in this country for many years exclusively by Monsanto.

Back in 1970, the late Rep. William F.Ryan, D-N. Y., citing early scientific warnings about PCB dangers to humans, called for strict federal controls. The indignant company assured him that it was taking voluntary action "to insure that (PCBs) present the minimum possible threat."

By mid-1971, however, PCB leaks had produced one of the major chemical disasters of the past decade. Food products seized, confiscated, destroyed or banned by federal officials because of PCB contamination in 1970 and 1971 included:

More than 400,000 eggs in Virginia and North Carolina, 250,000 pounds of turkey roll in South Carolina, 50,000 turkeys in Minnesota, and 350,000 chickens in Maine, New York and North Carolina.

Even after the widespread damage became known, Monsanto claimed it was being victimized by "scare tactics, political charges and sensational headlines." Last autumn, however, the company finally halted all PCB production and distribution.

Many of the cases in the early 1970s resulted from a single major PCB spill, contaminating 32 million pounds of fish meal. But subsequent, less dramatic seepage into the food chain makes PCBs a continuing threat to public health.

Today In History

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, June 9, the 160th day of 1978. There are 205 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history:

On this date in 1940, Norway's army surrendered to the German army in World War II.

On this date:

In the year 68, the Roman emperor Nero committed suicide.

In 1859, the Austrians were defeated by the French in the Battle of Montebello in Italy.

In 1815, the Congress of Vienna ended after dealing with the territorial and governmental problems resulting from the Napoleonic Wars.

In 1870, English writer Charles Dickens died.

In 1942, in World War II, the United States and Britain set up a joint war production and resources board.

In 1967, Gamal Abdel Nasser resigned as president of Egypt after his country was defeated in a war with Israel.

In 1971, the United States and Japan announced final agreement on terms for the return of the island of Okinawa to Japan.

Ten years ago: Gen. William Westmoreland stepped down as the U.S. commander in Vietnam and assured his troops that "the enemy has been defeated at every turn."

Five years ago: Monsoon rains were lashing the western coast of India, ending a threeyear drought.

One year ago: Uganda radio was making contradictory announcements on the whereabouts of President Idi Amin after he failed to show up at a Commonwealth conference in London, where he was not welcome.

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