

Monsanto

NAME & LOCATION: Pierre R. Wilkins - New York

DATE: May 9, 1979

PROJECT:

REFERENCE:

TO: J. E. McKee

CC: D. R. Bishop - A3NB
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The interview of Royce Scott and Owen Dolin by AP reporter Jane White covered the history of the 2,4,5-T incident in 1949, resultant health effects, the Suskind and Selikoff studies and a review of current environmental, health and safety programs at Nitro.

Prior to the reporter's arrival, the three of us had the opportunity to go through anticipated questions and responses, an exercise that proved particularly valuable.

Ms. White had previously interviewed Dr. Moses of the Mt. Sinai group; was scheduled to meet Dr. Suskind tomorrow (Thursday); and told us her plans to interview plant workers who had worked with 2,4,5-T. The latter was being arranged by union officials. We've learned that such interviews have taken place.

The reporter, who covered the Love Canal story for AP, has been following the dioxin story on specific assignment by AP. She's interviewed a Vietnamese public health official now touring the U.S. who charges that there has been an "explosion" of liver cancer deaths associated with Agent Orange (per the Sunday Times, 5/6/79). She's followed the reports of alleged birth defects in the state of Washington. It is her intention to wrap up these accounts in an in-depth piece that will include information gathered in Nitro and elsewhere on the 1949 incident, the two health studies, worker interviews, etc.

It's impossible to judge how Ms. White will treat the information she gathered in the plant interview since we don't know what she's been told by other sources. But she would have to go out of her way to put a negative slant on the information she got from us.

We do know that when asked if there was anything she was told by the Mt. Sinai people about the Nitro health study that suggested any problem areas whatsoever, she said Dr. Moses had no criticism of the cooperation offered by Monsanto. Dr. Moses also told the reporter that she has "no idea" what the Mt. Sinai study will ultimately reveal.

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I think it is certain that the reporter believes that there are serious health effects associated with dioxin exposure. And while she appeared to accept the fact that our experience has shown no incidence of liver cancer or other serious health problems, beyond chloracne, I would expect the story to detail a variety of ailments allegedly resulting from the spraying of 2,4,5-T in Vietnam and elsewhere.

We also may see dramatic descriptions of chloracne problems at Nitro as well as charges that dioxin exposure caused certain liver reactions, muscle weakness, etc., based on what she was told by the hourly workers.

Late Tuesday an AP photographer showed up at the plant unannounced, Scott reports, to take pictures of workers clocking-out. The photographer was assigned in connection with a story on the Nitro plant workers. Scott has learned that workers were interviewed and photographed at the union hall that same day -- all supporting the belief that we'll read about worker reactions to handling 2,4,5-T and its intermediates.

Ms. White will begin writing her story at the end of this week and, since she expressed a concern about how her "competition" might be following this story, we can expect to see her piece next week, in my opinion.

I will be talking to her this Friday on a follow-up question related to the cost -- in terms of dollars or man-hours -- of the Suskind study. That information I'm clearing through Lee Miller and DMEH.

I expect to be able to get my hands on the story shortly after it is filed and will, of course, circulate it to all concerned parties.


Pierre R. Wilkins

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