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EPA Finally Schedules Vinyl Chloride Hearings

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency has finally scheduled public hearings on limiting the danger of vinyl chloride emissions for those of us lucky enough not to work in vinyl chloride plants.

Maybe some witness will simply ask to read aloud an article by Joe Klein in the current issue of "Rolling Stone," a periodical not often cited at government gatherings. "The Plastic Coffin of Charlie Arthur" details the life and awful death of a worker at the B. F. Goodrich Development Center, a plastics plant in Avon Lake, Ohio.

Charlie Arthur died this year at 47 of a rare form of liver cancer called angiosarcoma, which is caused by exposure to vinyl chloride, a gas that is transformed into a powder, which goes into the making of seat covers, food wrappings, records, credit cards and shower curtains and countless other objects most of us handle every day.

Last year the plastics industry, after a ferocious battle in the courts, bowed to new vinyl chloride standards set by the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Plant closings, massive unemployment, disastrous ripple effects were predicted if certain safety measures for vinyl chloride workers were adopted. The government stood firm, and the plastics industry is still in the very best of economic health.

Came Too Late

The new limits came too late for Charlie Arthur. He had been wading in vinyl chloride vats as a young man. He had worked 20 years at Goodrich, and angiosarcoma has a latent period of 20 years.

In any case, according to the Rolling Stone account, the company was cheating on the rules. According to a

worker, identified only as Harry, one day the count was over 100, the red light was not on.

"In other words," Klein quotes Harry as saying, "the supervisor had pulled

By
MARY
McGRODY



the plug because they wanted everybody in that building to work."

The B. F. Goodrich company denied the charge through a spokesman.

Charlie, who had wasted away in full sight of his fellow workers and his family, died on Nov. 2, 1975. His wife Helen got the usual benefits of a widow whose husband died on the job. As a special favor, she also received four weeks of Charlie's pay. The company says there is a "relationship" between vinyl chloride and angiosarcoma, but does not admit that one causes the other.

No Agitation

Charlie Arthur's fellow workers were saddened by his wretched and untimely death, but not to the point of agitating through their union for stricter safety standards.

The counsel for the Society for the Plastics Industry, William D. Ruckelshaus, former environmental protection administrator and briefly a hero of conscience when he refused Richard Nixon's order to fire Archibald Cox during the Saturday Night Massacre, understands their attitude.

Ruckelshaus maintains, and the Goodrich workers bear him out, that a man would rather risk cancer in 20 years than not have a job.

He is fairly accustomed by now to being asked why he changed sides in the fight over the environment.

Stop Shouting

"I don't see the problem as having sides," he said. "We have to decide as a society how we can establish health standards and with a minimum impact on the economy. I think both sides should stop shouting at each other. We have to assess the benefits and the cost — the social cost, I mean."

The proposed EPA standards might safeguard the approximately 4.6 million people who live within a five-mile radius of ethylene dichloride, vinyl chloride and polyvinyl plants. They would lower plant emissions by more than 90 per cent.

"There are no dose-response data," says an EPA task force report, "and thus there is no absolute proof of adverse effects at the concentrations of vinyl chloride in the ambient air."

"However," the report goes on to say, "for carcinogens, there may be no atmospheric concentration which poses absolutely no public health risk."

Affect Public?

That is precisely what Rolling Stone is saying. But Rolling Stone goes on to say that "we are seeing the beginnings of a cancer epidemic among chemical workers that may spill over and affect the general population..."

We don't know what vinyl chloride emissions do to the surrounding population. We don't know what exposure to the shower curtains, records, credit cards and other objects made of the lethal convenience does to all of us.

Instead of asking what emission standards are "socially acceptable" for plastic plants, we ought to be asking ourselves if we need plastics that badly.

(Daily News Jan 6, 76)

Springfield

Dateline

No Hazard

12/18/75

A MONSANTO OFFICIAL said the firm's local plants will not be affected by the new, tighter federal regulations governing polyvinyl chloride, a chemical suspected of causing cancer.

The Monsanto spokesman said the Springfield plant once had an operation involving PVC, a plastic, but that operation was closed here.

The federal Environmental Protection Administration listed Monsanto as one of 58 companies nationwide that will have to spend an estimated \$198 million to cut down PVC emissions in their plants and another \$83 million to reduce discharges of the chemical into water.

Conventions

NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Daniel M. Walsh has called on the city to spend more money attracting convention business to Springfield.

Walsh said the convention business is highly competitive, and the city now faces keen rivalry from the Hartford Civic Center. Hartford spends about \$100,000 promoting its civic center as a convention attraction, while Springfield spent only \$10,000 on promotion.

A higher promotion budget would be

Walsh said the city ought...

Monsanto Unaffected By New Chloride Rules

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed regulations to reduce cancer-causing vinyl chloride emissions from operations similar to that which Monsanto Co. used to operate here.

EPA listed Monsanto as one of the 58 companies which would be affected by the regulations, but Robert Bogan of Monsanto said that the Springfield firm has completely ended its polyvinyl chloride operations, and so will not be affected.

The regulations, if approved, would require plants to cut emissions by 90 per cent, using the best available technology. EPA said the reduction is necessary to protect the health of an estimated 4.6 million people who live in proximity to the vinyl chloride plants.

The emission control program is expected to cost \$198 million, and companies will also have to spend about \$83 million to reduce discharges of vinyl chloride in water.

Monsanto ended its PVC operations in July of this year. Company spokesmen said at the time the decision to get out of the PVC field was made for economic reasons, because the operation was losing money and Monsanto's role in PVC production was too small to be able

to influence marketing.

The shutdown came a few months after the U.S. Labor Department put into effect new standards to limit the exposure of workers in vinyl chloride plants, but Plant Manager Gerald Ellsworth said when the operations were shut down that it had nothing to do with the link between vinyl chloride and

a rare form of liver cancer known as angio sarcoma.

Ellsworth said earlier this year that testing of employees who had been exposed to PVC would continue, although operations were ended.

According to EPA, exposure to the gas can cause cancer 20 years or more later.

Store Breakin Charged

Arraignment was scheduled today for two city men charged with a break at a butcher store on Orange Street late Tuesday night.

Police said John M. Bellefeuille, 22, of 39 Lester St. and Andrew H. Appleby, 20 of 108 Athol St. were charged with breaking and entering in the nighttime.

Police said one man was

nabbed in the basement of the building and the second was apprehended on the street.

They were released on their own recognizance pending the court appearance.

Student Named Magazine Editor

Rory J. O'Connor of 57 Cherrellyn St., has been named editor-in-chief of Newspeak, Worcester Polytechnic Institute student newspaper which has recently undergone a staff reorganization.

A member of the class of 1978, majoring in chemistry, he previously was an associate editor.

Newspeak was founded as Tech News in 1909 and is published weekly during the academic year, except during college vacation.

Plant Expert Giving Views

EAST LONGMEADOW — Larry Lirot of Larry's Plant Shed in East Longmeadow will present program entitled "Christmas at Louisburg Square" Thursday.

The meeting will be in the home of Mrs. Winifred Hobart of Ridge Road. Tea will be served at 12:30 p.m., with the program following.

Cancer-Death Surge For 7 Months of 1975 Sparks Investigation

Health Experts Are Puzzled
By 5.2% Rate Rise Against
Usual 1% Yearly Increase

By BARRY KRAMER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Health experts have begun an investigation of statistics that show a startling increase in the cancer death rate this year.

They are at a loss so far to explain figures released by the National Center for Health Statistics that show that more than 216,000 Americans died of cancer in the first seven months of this year, or a rate of 176.3 deaths per 100,000 population.

Although the cancer death rate has shown a gradual 1% increase in almost every year since the government began gathering the data in 1933, the death rate from January through July is a surprising 5.2% ahead of the similar period last year, when the rate was 167.6 per 100,000 or a total of about 202,000. The jump in the rate this year represents the largest increase ever.

Spokesmen for the statistical center and for the National Cancer Institute, both of which are units of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, said they haven't any clue for the sudden increase. The statistics are derived from a 10% random sampling of all death records, but researchers said the size of the increase seems to rule out a statistical fluke.

Surge in 1972

In 1972, the cancer death rate increased suddenly by 3.4% but this was later explained by a change that year in the way in which cancer deaths were coded and reported. The change resulted in more accurate reporting and thus a higher number of cancer deaths. The last previous major deviation in the rate, by 1.9% in 1952, is still unexplained.

Officials said there hasn't been any change this year in the way that deaths due to cancer are reported that could help explain the sudden increase. A spokesman for the cancer institute said statistical experts from the institute planned to begin a detailed examination of death records in an effort to determine a special cause, if any, for the increase.

But Robert J. Armstrong, statistician for the National Center for Health Statistics, said it would probably be a full year before experts might be able to say exactly how large the cancer death rate increase is, what types of cancer had increased, and in what parts of the country the deaths were concentrated, if at all. He predicted that statistics for the full year would also show an increase, of perhaps 4%, in the rate.

Although he said there wasn't any data to back him up, Mr. Armstrong said that,

Wall Street Journal
November 10, 1975

PEB HAS XC

based on previous years, one likely major cause of the large increase is lung cancer. While deaths from cancers of all types have been increasing at a 1% annual rate, lung-cancer deaths have increased by almost 4% a year for the past several years. Although fewer women get lung cancer than men, the lung-cancer death rate among women has been increasing twice as fast as the increase among men, apparently as more women take up smoking. According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer is the leading cancer killer of American males and it predicts that the rate among women will equal the male rate within 10 years.

Survival Rate Low

Because the disease often isn't detected until quite late, the survival rate is low, about 8% for men and 12% for women five years after treatment.

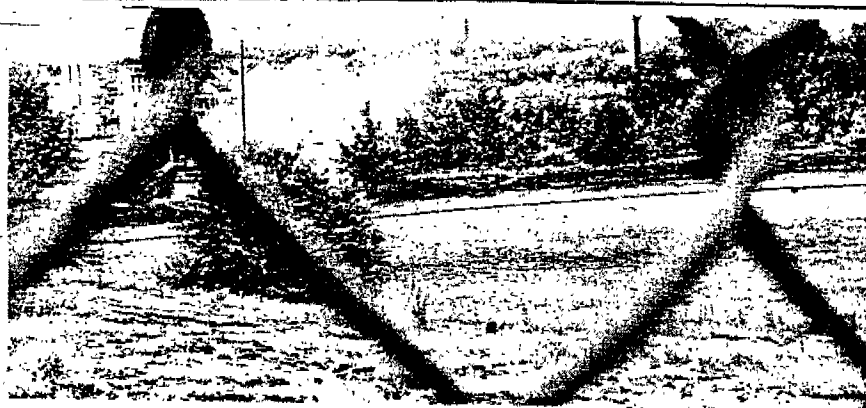
The all-cancer death rate was only 106 for each 100,000 population in 1933. By 1974, it had reached 169.4, when 358,080 Americans died of the disease.

The rate for all 1974 has been exceeded in all but one month between January and July of this year. In April, the rate reached 184.8, or 34,480 deaths, the highest cancer death rate for any single month in memory, officials said.

Part of the continued rise can be attributed to better diagnosis and reporting on death certificates, from which the statistics are derived, and to the fact that Americans are living more often to ages when cancer is more frequent.

But cancer researchers in recent years have zeroed in on several factors that probably account for a larger part of the increase. These include the smoking of tobacco products, numerous chemicals to which man is exposed in his food, in his workplace and elsewhere, and the types and quantities of food modern society eats. Other potential causes include viruses and failures in the body's own natural immunity system.

SUPPORTS OUR
INTERPRETATION
OF OUR 1ST
NUMBERS



Monsanto Leaves Neighbors To Potential Health Threat

It was harmless enough to look at, just a thin white powder that spread over backyards and children's swings on days the nearby Monsanto plant was working.

And for 27 years, children romped in it, sniffed it, maybe even swallowed it. Adults just breathed it — and kept the kids away.

The powder, which it turns out may cause cancer, is gone now, but only at Monsanto's convenience.

No government agency nor citizen's complaints going back six years could provoke a change by this chemical giant.

Not even the growing record of cancer-causing qualities attributed to the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) that is the source of the powder, not even the worker deaths around the country blamed on PVC swayed Monsanto from closing its Indian Orchard PVC operation before its target date: July 31, 1975.

Mrs. Thaddeus Pieniazek, a resident of Brittany Road in the neighborhood of the Monsanto plant, described her repeated unsuccessful attempts to stimulate the company's corporate conscience: "One evening there was a white fog enveloping the neighborhood. I called the plant and talked to the night supervisor. All he would tell me was that the telephone I was holding in my hand was made of polyvinyl chloride. I told him, 'That's very well, but the telephone I'm holding in my hand doesn't irritate my throat and make my eyes burn.' So he dropped that comparison."

Monsanto, according to Mrs. Pieniazek, never made any effort to deal responsibly with citizen complaints like hers. Instead, company officials devoted their energies to stalling and covering up. "I've been lied to by Monsanto."

Mrs. Pieniazek said angrily. "He told me it (PVC) wasn't harmful. I went so far as calling their office in St. Louis last summer.... A Mr. Howe came over, and he told me that nothing we were breathing was any more harmful than the dust in our garage."

Now that the PVC is gone, the effects on a generation of Springfield, Ludlow and Chicopee residents apparently will never be known. No one is testing them; no research is planned, despite 1974 EPA suggestions that industry support medical surveillance programs in neighborhoods near PVC complexes.

The people who breathed the stuff since 1948 are being left on their own to suffer the possible damage in years to come.

Mrs. Pieniazek's youngest son, she says, has been suffering severe respiratory attacks since the family moved to a home near the Monsanto plant. "I can't afford to sit back and have them tell me 20 years from now that they're sorry because they've done some terrible harm to one of my children. They should be doing something about it now."

This is a brief chronology of events preceeding the shutdown:

— August, 1969: Chicopee Falls residents collect 65 signatures complaining about "obnoxious odors" and a mysterious dust coming from the plant.

— September, 1970: Neighborhood residents file telephone complaints with the state Air Pollution Control Agency.

— November, 1970: Following an accident that leaves the Chicopee River coated with PVC, Monsanto asserts: "It's harmless and one can eat or drink it without suffering any side effects."

— January 7, 1971: In response to a request from the state, Monsanto reveals that the powder is 25 per cent polyvinyl chloride. However, the report was kept secret and neighborhood residents were not told.

— April, 1972: An Italian chemist, Dr. Cesare Maltoni, doing research for firms that package goods in containers of PVC finds cancer developing in rats exposed to the substance.

— June, 1972: A Johns Hopkins research project says a plastic used in PVC blood bags

See Monsanto Page 9

Monsanto

(Continued from Page 6)

may prompt "shock lung," frequently the cause of death among surgical patients receiving massive blood transfusions.

— December, 1972: When a tank car of vinyl chloride rolls into the Westfield River, Monsanto, contradicting its earlier assertions, announces that VC is "comparable in toxicity and explosive qualities to gasoline."

— January, 1974: A number of chemical firms report to the federal government that several workers exposed to PVC have died of a rare cancer, angiosarcoma of the liver. (None of the deaths, however, was at Monsanto plants.)

— June, 1975: The state reveals the previously secret report analyzing the powder as one-fourth PVC. State pollution agents cite Monsanto on June 6 for violation of "state particulate limits."

— July, 1975: A poll of local hospitals reveals at least three angiosarcomas in this area in the past two years.