Monsanto

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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March 21, 1969

Mr. Hermes A. Trimegistus
1608 D. Walnut
Berkeley, Calif. 94709

Dear Mr. Trimegistus:

Please pardon the delay in answering your letter of February 24 about the supposed contamination of wildlife by polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), but I wanted to give you a full reply.

I know your note was prompted by the story in the San Francisco Chronicle. Unfortunately, the deadline of the writer did not permit Monsanto to supply its side of the story. Therefore, I want to give you some facts which should have been presented.

First, Mr. Trimegistus, let me assure you that Monsanto has the deepest concern for proper use of our products and how they affect mankind. In fact, we recently began a new venture to provide cities and industry with new techniques for eliminating pollution. One facility demonstrated in the East removes pollutants from the stacks of coal-fired boilers. Another unit offers cities an improved method for treating materials released to the water.

Some of the implications in the Chronicle story are not true. For example, Monsanto does not make DDT pesticide. Other points were not mentioned.

As you know, the article was based on work done by Dr. Robert Risebrough at the University of California. He measured residues found in wildlife and reported traces of pesticide (DDT and DDE) plus traces of PCB. After studying Dr. Risebrough's full report, we doubt if he made a complete identification of these materials. It seems he may have depended upon earlier work done in Sweden by scientists using entirely different sources.

Perhaps I should explain that PCB is not a pesticide. Its primary market is in functional fluids such as the insulating material in electrical transformers. Here the chemical is

DSW 201071

completely sealed in metal containers. Another PCB market is as a modifier in specialized adhesives and coatings. Here the chemical is an integral part of the product and cannot be washed away, etc.

To our knowledge, PCB is not spread over the land as are pesticides, is not used in automobile tires, is not found in vinyl plastic, is not used in house paints -- as has been charged.

The earlier work done in Sweden reported traces of a residue, identified as PCB, in quantities approaching that of DDT pesticide. Even though all these quantities required very precise measurement since they were in the parts-per-billion range, we are highly puzzled by one fact. How could that much commercially produced PCB appear in the natural environment? It is a specialized product used in restricted ways.

One possible answer is that the substance is not really PCB, but a material which only appears so.

It has also been implied that PCB is a "highly toxic" material. Toxicity is a relative matter whether we are considering chemicals, drugs or even food. Like thousands of industrial and household products, PCB is not a hazardous material if it is properly used. In more than 30 years of industrial use, the chemical has an excellent record.

Of course, Monsanto is not content to just raise questions. We will continue to exercise the highest degree of control in our manufacture and shipment of PCB -- as we do with all products. We also have our own research program to identify the substances reported in California and Sweden. Some of this work is in cooperation with federal and university laboratories.

The source of the residues identified as PCB is not yet known. It will take extensive research, on a worldwide basis, to confirm or deny these initial scientific reports.

Sincerely,

Tom C. Ford
Manager
Divisional Public Relations

TCF:mw

DSW 201072

PS -- Sorry, but I can't comment on the postscript in your letter. "Better Living Through Chemistry" is DuPont's slogan. -- TCF

DSW 201073