



May 6, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL
FACT SHEET

RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL
"FACT SHEET" ON MONSANTO

TO:

Corporate Administrative Committee
Environmental Policy Staff and
Selected Network
Directors of Environmental Operations
Directors of Public Relations

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The Missouri Coalition for the Environment has prepared for Missouri Representative Bob Feigenbaum a lopsided and erroneous one-page "fact sheet" on Monsanto's environmental record. The sheet (attached) apparently is part of the group's effort to lobby on behalf of a Missouri worker right-to-know law. Some copies of it have been distributed in the Missouri legislature attached to Rep. Feigenbaum's right-to-know bill. Monsanto's government affairs office called Rep. Feigenbaum to object to the sheet, and he said he would make no further use of it. At the same time, the public relations office is preparing a rebuttal to the sheet for use in Jefferson City and with the news media generally. PR also will state our objections to the Coalition.

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from Missouri's "Coalition for the Environment"

FACT SHEET ON MONSANTO

Monsanto has earned a better reputation than some other chemical companies, such as Hooker and Dow, but that isn't saying very much.

Monsanto recently lost a lawsuit by workers exposed to dioxin in a train wreck in Sturgeon Missouri. The workers charged that they were not informed of the hazard of the chemical, and were awarded over \$50 million by the jury.

Monsanto was the exclusive US manufacturer of PCBs for 50 years. PCBs caused birth defects and cancer and are highly persistent in the environment. Monsanto produced over 1 billion pounds of PCBs from the early 1930's to the late 1970's. Most of this is still around. PCBs have been found in animal tissues from polar bears in the Arctic to penguins in the Antarctic. PCBs have been measured in human breast milk at levels which would be illegal in cow's milk. 98% of people recently tested were found to have PCBs in their bodies. Monsanto was aware that PCBs had toxic properties in the early 1930's, but only stopped producing them after a government ban.

Monsanto's Sauget plant is discharging dioxins into the Mississippi River, upstream of the water intake of many communities, like Cape Girardeau. It is also a major source of probable toxic air pollutants.

Workers at Monsanto's Nitro plant are suing the company for a total of over \$4 BILLION. The worker's are suffering from a variety of serious diseases, and are charging that the company did not inform them of the toxic substances they were exposed to, including 2,3,7,8-TCDD (The dioxin).

Monsanto now provides chemical and hazard information to its employees, and uses good engineering controls to minimize levels of toxic substances in the workplace. A cynic might suspect that this is due less to good will on the company's part than to the insistence of the International Chemical Workers' Union and to prudent fear of future lawsuits. A real cynic might wonder whether Monsanto's current opposition to right to know is motivated by desire to make competitors learn good behavior the hard way.

MONSANTO RESPONSE to "Fact Sheet on Monsanto" prepared for Representative Bob Feigenbaum by Mark Schaeffer of the Coalition for the Environment.

This sheet is so shot full of inaccuracies and misinterpretation that it were better called a "fiction sheet." A more specific rebuttal follows:

para. 2 - Sturgeon

Monsanto did not lose this lawsuit. We settled out of court with the rail workers. Had this case been brought in any court other than Madison County, Ill., we might well have gone to trial on the matter. But as the April 1983 American Lawyer journal noted, "a peculiar and complex system of justice ... prevails in Madison County -- a system in which plaintiffs almost always win."

The Norfolk & Western Railway, which did lose the case, has appealed it because of "the total unfairness of the trial and the complete bias and prejudice in the jury," according to the company's legal brief.

para. 3 - PCBs

The weight of scientific evidence shows that PCBs cause neither birth defects nor cancer. A 1978 study by the National Cancer Institute found that PCBs were "not carcinogenic to the rats under the test conditions." Further, a 1981 investigation by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health on 2,567 workers exposed to PCBs while manufacturing electrical equipment found that "all-cause mortality was lower than expected as well as all cancer mortality."

Neither we nor anyone else were aware of the environmental problems associated with PCBs until the late 1960s. For decades prior, PCBs were required in electrical equipment by many building codes because of their fire and explosion-resistant properties. Once the environmental persistence of PCBs was established, Monsanto mounted a model program for informing workers and customers on safe handling of PCBs.

We began phasing out manufacture of these chemicals in 1971. In 1975, the U.S. EPA asked that we not terminate all PCB production for fear of shutting down the electrical power and railroad industries. Consequently, we continued manufacture for these uses until July 1977. This date put us out of the PCB business two years ahead of the federal ban.

para. 4 - "discharging dioxins" from Sauget

The charge is a vague one. We do not discharge any 2,3,7,8 TCDD dioxin (the toxic form at issue in Times Beach, Mo.) in wastewater from the Krummrich (Sauget) Plant. This discharge meets the pollution limits in its clean-water permit.

Perhaps the dioxin claim refers to occasional seepage from the Mississippi River bank on the Krummrich property. In this case, we are working with state and federal EPA officials to determine the source of this seepage. If our landfill is found responsible, and if corrective action is needed, we'll take it.

At the same time, it should be noted that sampling done last year by the U.S. EPA found that the seepage poses no health hazard. The trace amounts of dioxins found in the seepage do not include 2,3,7,8 TCDD but other and less toxic forms of this compound. Further, samples of water taken by Monsanto both above and below the seepage site found no significant differences in the small amounts of chemicals present in the river.

As to toxic air pollution, the Sauget plant is in compliance with local and federal clean-air requirements.

para. 5 - Nitro

The "fiction sheet" is off by a factor of roughly six on the damages being sought by past and present workers at our Nitro, West Virginia, Plant. These workers are seeking about \$700 million from Monsanto, not \$4 billion. Whether they "are suffering" from any occupational disease has yet to be determined. Anyone can file a suit; this gives absolutely no indication of the merit of their case.

para. 6 - Worker Health and Monsanto

No argument with the first sentence. We do indeed provide "chemical and hazard information" to our employees as well as training. We consistently have been among industry leaders in practicing state-of-the-art worker protection programs. Surveys regularly find the chemical industry among the safest places to work, and last year Monsanto achieved its best safety record ever, according to National Safety Council statistics.

para. 6 - Cynicism

To quote the coalition's sheet, "a real cynic might wonder" why it errs so badly and often when a simple check with Monsanto or news accounts would have yielded accurate information.

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