W. A. Knoff

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FROM JC Fedoruk DATE 2/15/74

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N.Y. Times
Fri. Feb. 15, 1974

Alert Is Declared for Plastics Worke[rs]

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

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Production Forces

Some 6,500 workers in 51 American plants and many more thousands of European workers are involved in the production of vinyl chloride or polyvinyl chloride, a white powdery chemical resembling sugar.

In addition, tens of thousands of American workers participate in the conversion of these raw materials, vinyl chloride and polyvinyl chloride, into countless products, including paints, construction pipes, furniture, upholstery, draperies, wall coverings, floor tiles, table cloths, toys, clothing, footwear, food packages, garden hoses, phonograph records, dentures, bottles and pharmaceutical products. In turn, hundreds of millions of consumers in every industrialized society are exposed to these products.

Thus, when Goodrich officials conveyed Dr. Creech's observations to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health three weeks ago, the situation was regarded as "a serious emergency to be immediately and fully investigated," Dr. Marcus M. Key, director of the institute, told a meeting of labor and management in Cleveland this week.

Accordingly, the institute, as well as Goodrich and the Manufacturing Chemists Association, has begun intensive studies of thousands of workers — past and present, dead and alive — and a variety of laboratory animals to determine the nature, extent and cause of illness among vinyl chloride workers.

Emergency Action

Although these studies will take many months, and in some cases years, to complete, at a hearing today in Washington the institute will recommend emergency corrective action to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which is considering new regulations to protect workers exposed to vinyl chloride.

The current Federal standard allows workers to breathe as much as 500 parts of vinyl chloride per million parts of air, a level that readily causes liver damage in animals, according to a study published 13 years ago by a Dow Chemical Company scientist. The Government did not act upon this finding. Several companies, however, including Goodrich, stiffened their plant standard to 50 parts per million, one-tenth the permitted level.

However, one study showed that at certain points of the polyvinyl chloride operation workers may be temporarily exposed to vinyl chloride levels of up to 1,500 parts per million. In Europe, where 75 per cent of the world's supply of vinyl chloride is produced, signs of liver disease have been found in a large percentage of exposed workers, according to foreign language reports dating to the early nineteen sixties.

Impact of Italian Report

But it took a report in 1970 of an Italian laboratory experiment to shake up the vinyl chloride industry. Rats exposed to very high levels of the chemical developed cancers of the skin and lungs.

This prompted the European industry to begin its own studies, one of which has reportedly resulted in angiosarcoma of the liver in rats exposed to low levels of vinyl chloride — lower than the United States standard of 500 parts per million.

Prof. Cesare Maltoni of the University of Bologna, who did the experiment, is expected to describe his results to the hearing in Washington today.

"With this finding, we have come full cycle," Dr. Irving J. Selikoff remarked at the Cleveland meeting. "We have cancer in the vinyl chloride workers and apparently the identical tumor has been reproduced in animals exposed to the chemical," said Dr. Selikoff, who is director of environmental medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine here.

Nonetheless, Dr. Selikoff and institute scientists said they were keeping an open mind about the cause of the problem. Some 50 or 60 different chemicals besides vinyl chloride are used in these plants, and any one of them could turn ou[t to] be the culprit, they explaine[d].

It is also possible that so[me]thing peculiar to the Louisvi[lle] workers — either now or [in] the past — accounts for th[e] susceptibility to this ra[re] tumor.

Doctor's Prediction

However, Dr. Creech, f[or] one, does not think so. "I thi[nk] when we look we'll find angi[o]sarcoma of the liver all ov[er] the world wherever vin[yl] chloride is used," he said in [a] telephone interview. He bas[ed] his prediction on a previo[us] experience.

A decade ago, he said, h[e] discovered that some of t[he] Louisville workers had a pec[u]liar condition in their finge[rs] called acroosteolysis — slo[w] destruction of the bone at th[e] fingertips. Industrywide su[r]veys disclosed that this was [a] fairly common worldwide pr[ob]lem, typically occurring in th[e] workers who cleaned the hu[ge] reactor tanks where the co[n]version of vinyl chloride t[o] polyvinyl chloride takes place.

Subsequent changes in clea[n]ing practices have virtual[ly] eliminated this problem, D[r.] Creech said.

The 51-year-old Kentuck[y-]born surgeon added that th[e] liver cancer probably showe[d] up in Louisville first "becaus[e] we are one of the oldest plant[s] —1940—and the workers hav[e] been exposed longer to viny[l] chloride." He said recognitio[n] of the problem was aided b[y] the fact that the same phys[i]cian saw all the cases.

"But had the cancer been [a] more common one, such a[s] lung cancer, I probably woul[d] not have realized there wa[s] any problem in the first place," Dr. Creech said.

Dr. Selikoff noted that th[e] "plastic era—now about 3[0] years old—is just coming [of] age in terms of latent period[s] for the onset of disease amo[ng] exposed persons. He said h[is] interest in the problem extende[d] beyond the workers to the gen[eral] public, who may be ex[posed] to vinyl chloride tha[t] leaches out of finished prod[ucts].

"The workers are the 'ca[na]ries'," he remarked. "The[y] give us hints of what we migh[t] find in the population at large."

Accordingly, Dr Edward Fe[r]rand of the New York Cit[y] Environmental Protection Ad[]ministration has begun to ana[]lyze hundreds of consumer prod[]ucts for vinyl and polyvin[yl] chloride.

"We don't know if these find[]ings will have any relevance t[o] the public," Dr. Ferrand com[]mented, "but we don't want t[o] be caught without informatio[n] if something turns up."

It is this sort of prophylacti[c] approach that Dr. Seliko[ff] would like the institute t[o] adopt. "The N.I.O.S.H. bud[get] and staff are not as large a[s] they should be," he told th[e] Cleveland [illegible] tute has been do[ing] [illegible] ing and doing it well, but [it] shouldn't only be doing [fire] fighting. It should [illegible] anticipate crises [illegible] off before they [illegible]."

W.A.K.
FEB 19 1974

ASI 000012049

him with a public forum.

Mr. Jaworski conceded ... letter that it was possible to return indictments in the main Watergate case without obtaining further information. This case involves the June 17, 1972, break-in at the Democratic national headquarters at the Watergate complex and the subsequent White House cover-up.

However, he emphasized, "The material is important to a complete and thorough investigation and may contain evi-

Continued on Page 12, Column 4

... "Nixon" about 50 yards away and directly in front of the platform."

On Lawn

The ceremony was held on the lawn of the hospital center in downtown Miami. Mr. Nixon agreed to participate in order to promote his proposal for national health insurance and to underscore his approval of the method in which the $75-million, automated facility is being built—without Federal grants but with Federal loan guarantees.

There was a heavy security detail, and the 2,500 invited guests were cordoned off on the hospital property. Several hundred others, who formed the bulk of the anti-Nixon demonstration, gathered on 14th Street before the Dade County Public Safety Department building facing the hospital.

The demonstrators, who received the permission of the police to picket, were an assortment of dissidents—senior

Continued on Page 13, Column 1

Liver Cancer Alert Declared to Protect Plastics Workers

By JANE E. BRODY

As physician for the B.F. Goodrich chemical plant in Louisville, Ky., Dr. John L. Creech Jr. examines all employes returning to work after an illness. He was struck recently by the large number of serious liver ailments among the workers, compared with patients he saw in his private surgical practice.

Dr. Creech searched his memory and worker records and discovered that in the last five years four employes had died of angiosarcoma of the liver, an extremely rare cancer. All the affected workers, he found, were directly involved in the production of polyvinyl chloride from vinyl chloride, a gaseous organic chemical known to damage the liver at high concentrations.

The doctor suspected a relationship between this chemical and the illnesses he was seeing in the workers. His suspicions have led the Government to declare an "occupational-health" emergency and seek ways to protect workers. They have also spurred extensive studies by

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Kidnapping View

"In the first place," he said, "we don't know where she is. In the second place, a statement like that is an antagonistic one that I don't think has any place in the negotiations we're trying to conduct out here.

"And to make a statement that you're going to bust in and shoot the place up from Washington I believe is damn near irresponsible," Mr. Hearst told a news conference on the lawn of his home here.

A tape recording containing preliminary ransom demands was received by the Hearsts and was broadcast Tuesday. In it, Miss Hearst, a 19-year-old student at the University of California, in a message to her father said, "It's really up to you to make sure that these

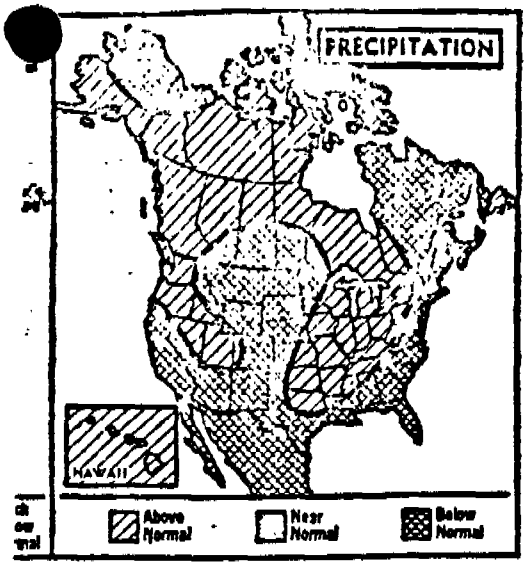
Continued on Page 68, Column 4

Vinyl Chloride

ASI 000012050

Pg 66

ruary to Mid-March



The New York Times/Feb. 15, 1974

pplied by the National Weather Service, show es from normal temperatures and from normal this period for five key cities are as follows: r, 33.7; San Francisco, 52.4; Anchorage, 21.5.

n fact help prison-long prison terms. says it cannot pro-timate of either the ey it has spent of projects it on behavior modifi-

t for such info ma-e Times two weeks swered by the agen-y with a comp uter some 400 projects "might" somehow to behavior re-

reliminary review out, as well as of some grant applications and reports on other projects specifically identified by The Times for L.E.A.A., it was possible to pinpoint at least about $1.5-million spent on projects involving behavior modification.

Asked how the agency would halt currently operating projects covered by the ban when it did not know what those projects were, a spokesman said that "some of the details have to be worked" but that there would be a "careful screening" by agency headquarters here and by its regional offices.

er Reports and Forecast

Alert Is Declared for Plastics Workers

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

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A decade ago, he said, he discovered that some of the Louisville workers had a peculiar condition in their fingers, called acroosteloysis —, slow destruction of the bone at the fingertips. Industrywide surveys disclosed that this was a fairly common worldwide problem, typically occurring in the workers who cleaned the high reactor tanks where the conversion of vinyl chloride to polyvinyl chloride takes place.

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Dr. Selikoff noted that the "plastic era—now about 35 years old—is just coming of age in terms of latent period" for the onset of disease among exposed persons. He said his

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→ Dr W A Knapp
Corp Env Svcs

FEB 20 1974

Liver Cancer Case Found by Doctors In 2d Plastic Plant

By JANE E. BRODY

Another case of a rare liver cancer has been found among vinyl chloride workers, this one at a Union Carbide plant in South Charleston, W. Va.

Previously, six cases of the fatal disease, called angiosarcoma of the liver, were found among vinyl chloride workers at the B. F. Goodrich Chemical Company in Louisville, Ky.

The discovery of the disease, which has been described as "a new occupational cancer" by Government scientists, has spurred an industrywide search for liver and other ailments among workers exposed to vinyl chloride, a chemical that forms the basis for much of the modern plastics industry.

The latest case turned up in a search of employe death records by Union Carbide, according to Dr. Carl Dernehl, the company's associate medical director. The victim, whose primary cause of death was listed as heart attack with angiosarcoma of the liver as a contributing cause, was 45 years old when he died in 1968. He had worked at converting vinyl chloride to its polymer, polyvinyl chloride, for 18 years at the nation's oldest polyvinyl chloride plant.

Scientists from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have begun a systematic search of death and health records.

In a related action, Ralph Nader's Health Research Group yesterday petitioned the Food and Drug Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency to ban the use of vinyl chloride in aerosol consumer products, including cosmetics, hair sprays, household sprays and pesticides.

NY Times, Feb 2, 1974