December 1970

Letter to the Editor:

We have learned that a letter dated Nov. 11, 1970, from an organization called "Responsible Environmental Action Program" of Gonzalez, Fla., was published in your newspaper. And we feel your readers should know Monsanto Company's position on this matter.

It is apparent that the writer did not have a complete understanding of the present state of pollution control at our Pensacola, Fla., plant. For example, as of last September less than 2 per cent of the BOD generated by plant operations was discharged into the Escambia River. This represents a reduction of over 98 per cent in total BOD generated by the plant -- the equivalent of tertiary treatment. Tertiary treatment is a third stage waste treatment system practiced in only a very few places in the United States today. The other categories of pollutants noted in the letter were similarly reduced.

The figures quoted in the letter were those which appeared in a report of a federal hearing held Jan. 21 and 22, 1970, at Gulf Breeze, Fla. We objected to these figures at the time principally because they did not take into account the condition of the waters in the river prior to use by our plant. In effect, the pollution statistics quoted from this report were not limited to the portions actually contributed by our plant.

It is surprising to us that a plant that has done so much and spent so many millions of dollars to abate pollution since its completion 17 years ago has been the target of so much ill-considered, uninformed and unfair criticism.

The plant had a full-time pollution control technical staff prior to the advent of this general practice in industry. The plant built one of the first secondary waste treatment systems in the nation devoted exclusively to industrial waste. When we felt that this method of abatement might be inadequate, the plant improved its waste removal techniques through more and better technology, and today produces an effluent that has more than 98 per cent of the oxygen-challenging BOD removed. Those who would criticize our treatment of wastes should familiarize themselves with the facts.

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The letter mentions AstroTurf. This product does not contribute to environmental problems because scientists say the supply of oxygen is so vast as to be virtually inexhaustible. The fact is that this kind of artificial turf eliminates the need for lawn and garden chemicals.

In summary, we feel the people involved in writing the letter, although possibly well-meaning, were misguided.

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