

Talking Points re News Media Coverage of Dioxin:

- 1) Local news media virtually ignored Monsanto's Nov. 1982 press release announcing the results of Dr. Suskind's University of Cincinnati Health Study -- the most significant piece of hard medical research ever done on a group of people exposed (years ago) to dioxin. Missourians exposed to amounts far less may have found some comfort in knowing that the likelihood of long-term problems is extremely remote, based on Suskind's work.
- 2) News media accepted the CDC's 1 ppb "safe" level on blind faith. If anything over 1 ppb is dangerous, why does EPA permit up to 100 ppb in herbicides for commercial use? Do you know dioxin has been detected in the background air in St. Louis and other large cities at levels far above 1 ppb? If you looked into how the 1 ppb level was arrived at, i.e., they took the most sensitive animal data (the guinea pig) and added a safety factor of 1,000 and then assumed that people would eat the dirt for years. Don't take our word for this, check it. And while you're at it, why not ask independent scientists what they think of the practicality of this risk assessment vis-a-vis buying out contaminated sites.
- 3) Dr. Robert Neal, president of the Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology, visited St. Louis last fall to help the media, state officials and the public understand dioxin. His credentials, expertise and motives were immediately challenged by some news media - fair enough! But why, on the other hand, do most reporters, including the TV networks, instantly grant "expert" status and prominent space to the likes of Dr. Samuel Epstein and Dr. Bertran Carnow, both of Chicago, without similarly challenging their expertise and especially their motives? Why are only pro-industry pronouncements suspect? Neither of these "media experts" have ever published any of their so-called research in scientific journals! Nor have they ever submitted any of their work to critical scientific peer review.

The only thing Epstein ever published is "best selling" novels like "The Politics of Cancer," in which he charges there is a cancer epidemic - chemically induced and that the chemical industry is engaged in a "Watergate -type" cover up. So it should be clear where he's coming from.

Dr. Carnow's claim to fame is that of an "expert" witness for the plaintiffs in dioxin - related lawsuits. His fee in the Sturgeon law suit last summer was \$750,000.

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- 4) And finally, much of the media coverage of dioxin fits Time magazine's definition of what it recently called "water torture Journalism" -- news stories that add one little fact and then go on to lengthily repeat familiar allegations.

The St. Louis media have run literally hundreds of stories on dioxin, all repetitiously emphasizing human health aspects that are both unproved and unfounded.

A case in point was the Post-Dispatch coverage of a June 1 Symposium on Dioxin in which considerable positive, good information was presented, which would clearly suggest that Missourians are not going to suffer cancer or other serious long-term health effects from the dioxin present in the local environment. While some of this good information was indeed included in the Post-Dispatch article, it was hard to find buried deeply under the headline: "Researchers Tell of Ills Linked to Dioxin".

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