Monsanto

FROM (LOCATION) Elmer P. Wheeler, St. Louis

DATE October 10, 1969

SUBJECT Background for Correspondence with Dr. Olcott

REFERENCE

TO E. J. Bock

cc: ~~J. Coon~~ (Bill Kuhn?)
R. S. Gordon
K. H. Maddy
R. P. Upchurch

Bill Kuhn
- We recd blind c.c.'s
- you were only one with [illegible] a c.c.
- you may keep or pitch Hodges [illegible] a c.c.

Attached is my reply of October 10 to Dr. Olcott's recent letter of October 6. For your convenience I have also attached Olcott's letter, a copy of which you received earlier.

As indicated in the second paragraph of my reply, I called Dr. Olcott in August to arrange a visit to him at Berkeley. The trip was to be in conjunction with a Symposium on August 18, 19 and 20 entitled, "The Biological Impact of Pesticides in the Environment" at Oregon State University, Corvallis. Olcott indicated that the visit to Berkeley would not be convenient because he would be preparing for a six week trip to Europe. He suggested that since I was going to Corvallis, I could talk to his associate, Dr. Risebrough.

You will recall it was Dr. Risebrough who published a paper in Nature indicating that he had found polychlorinated biphenyls (our Aroclors) in fish and wildlife in California. He was subsequently interviewed by the San Francisco Chronicle which ran a scare story about a "new menacing environmental pollutant" and identified Monsanto as the sole U. S. producer of PCB's.

Dr. Risebrough was on the program at the Symposium in Corvallis on the first day. His presentation was from notes using visual aids and inflamatory in character. On three occasions he referred to Monsanto in derogatory terms. Shell Chemical was mentioned once in a somewhat similar vein.

The attendance at the Symposium was nearly 400 with representatives from some 25 states--principally from state universities and state government agencies representing agriculture and conservation. The planners for the Symposium had expected an attendance of about 50. Risebrough has developed a group of supporters which follow him around the country. There were at least six in the audience (including two from Cornell) easily identified by their appearance--ragged blue jeans, beards, long unkempt hair, sandles, etc. (the female member of the group did not attend the sessions but spent the days under the trees outside the auditorium).

MONS 097277

IN-10 REV. 8-64

Risebrough and his cohorts were continually surrounded by representatives from the press, TV and radio during every break or intermission during the Symposium. To my knowledge there was no national coverage but the Northwest, particularly Oregon and Washington, devoted considerable coverage to the meeting. Newspapers in California ran several stories concerning the technical papers presented and included interviews with the authors.

Risebrough is maintaining that the PCB's--along with DDT-- are responsible for the decline in population of sea birds along the California coast. He included slides of nests of brown pelicans on Anacapa Island off Oxnard (a long time breeding ground) where examination of 1,000 nests revealed eggs in only three with any shells. He stated further that evidence indicated only one bird had been born on the island in 1969 rather than the usual thousands.

In the discussion period following Risebrough's comments, a representative of Diamond Shamrock attempted to get some reasoned statements out of Risebrough. The exchange was very unsatisfactory requiring the chairman to terminate it. When the session broke up, the man from Diamond Shamrock was confronted by the group of hippies protesting his views.

With this background of circumstances it did not appear appropriate to try to approach Dr. Risebrough for any meaningful discussions.

Elmer P. Wheeler

EPW:ju

Enclosures (2)