Monsanto

MONSANTO INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS CO.
800 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63166
Phone: (314) 694-1000

Dec. 10, 1975

Ms. Annella Smith
R.R. 2, Box 128
Danville, Ind. 46122

Dear Ms. Smith:

This will acknowledge your thoughtful letter, addressed to Mr. Ericson.

I've attached a copy of a letter sent recently to a lady in St. Louis which answers some of the questions you have raised.

Since your letter deserves a thorough response, I will address myself to the issues not covered in the attachment.

I am not familiar with the article by Mr. Shea but I do know that the "Yushd' Incident has been widely misrepresented. Here are the facts. The rice oil did indeed become contaminated with sizeable quantities of PCB when a cooling pipe containing the fluid, ruptured. About 1,000 people were effected as a result of this unfortunate industrial accident. These people exhibited symptoms of dizzyness, nausea, loss of apetite, weakness and dermatological side effects.

There were no deaths attributed to this incident. Babies, whose mothers had been exposed to the contaminated rice oil, were born with darkened skin but, in every case, this condition cleared within three months. There were no miscarriages or still births as has been sometimes reported.

It is important to remember that the level of contamination that resulted from this accident was measured in parts per hundred (a very high concentration) rather than the parts per billion or trillion that are being found in marine life. An awful lot of products considered harmless are, indeed, helpful in the normal quantities we injest, would have produced results equally bad or worse in the parts per hundred range.

Monsanto did unilaterally and voluntarily restrict PCB sales to sealed electrical systems such as capacitors and transformers. That program is discussed in some detail in the attached letter.

Regarding your concern that closed systems would falter, it is true that premature failures do occur but capacitors are considered long-lived products. The life expectancy of capacitors exceeds 10 years for lighting applications and more than 20 years in electric utility transmission applications. We recommend the use of properly managed and authorized environmental land-fills to safely dispose of worn out capacitors. These are specially designed, constructed and monitored land-fills not to be confused with common garbage dumps. We recognize that many communities do not yet have the capability to construct and operate an approved environmental land-fill. Since the possibility still exists that in these areas, the PCBs in discarded capacitors could eventually find their way into bodies of water, we began, in 1971, production of a modified PCB material, containing fewer of the persistent isomers. Further, the PCBs used in this application are absorbed onto solid particles in the capacitors and do not easily leach out. This modified product has been universally accepted by the capacitor industry and has greatly reduced the pollution potential from this source.

Regarding our incinerator -- we will destroy spent PCBs for any customer. The charge for this service is quite nominal and far from covering the total cost involved. There are three other incinerator operations strategically located around the country (not Monsanto operated) available to customers.

I really can't agree that it is a defect. It only becomes a defect when it is carelessly allowed to enter the environment. By your definition, one could presume that oil is a defect when it ends up in the ocean as a result of a ship mishap. But it's not Standard Oil's fault that the ship had the mishap, is it?

We don't believe any company to which we are currently selling PCBs dumps it into the kind of land-fill to which you refer. Special environmental land-fills as discribed above, yes, but common dumps, no! We honestly believe that the PCBs being found in the environment today have been there for many years and originally found their way into the environment from the "open" type applications that used them prior to 1970. Recent studies, a copy of a recent press clipping is enclosed, seem to confirm our belief.

Our current customers all know full-well what they are buying and what precautions should be taken in disposal. There are all sorts of warnings on the labels we place on the drums of material including one that says: "Warning, studies show that PCBs are injurious to some birds, aquatic and animal life."

Regarding your final concern about what Monsanto is doing to eliminate PCBs, I've attached an advance copy of a press announcement which we will be issuing shortly. It describes our efforts to develop replacement products and addresses itself to some of the problems we are trying to solve.

I hope this material gives you a better perspective of the dilemma we are faced with and an insight into what we are trying to do.

Thanks again for your thoughtful letter.

Sincerely yours,

D. R. Bishop
Director, Public Relations

/mks
attachments