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4/9/84

Monsanto

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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April 2, 1984

Mr. Bruce Sankey
City Editor
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
900 North Tucker Blvd.
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

Dear Bruce:

I knew you'd be disappointed if you didn't hear from me regarding the story about PCBs in the Post-Dispatch's printing ink. Far be it from me to let you down. So, fresh from reading this morning's P-D, and now that I've washed the PCB-contaminated ink from my hands, I'm ready to begin.

When Bob Koenig called last Friday to break the news, he said I'd probably find the situation "amusing." And I'd be less than honest if I didn't admit to a certain amount of amusement. However, I was more curious than amused -- curious to see how the P-D was going to handle the story.

I had to wait until Sunday to find out. For what it's worth, I found the story to be a radical departure from the P-D's established style. In fact, if I didn't know better, I might have concluded that it was either written by -- or at least heavily edited by -- a public relations person or even a lawyer.

Let me explain. As you know, the story appeared on page 5 in Section D under the headline: Newspaper's Ink Meets EPA Standards. Frankly, I almost missed the story because of this. I somehow expected to see a headline more like: Post-Dispatch Ink Contains PCBs. Those headline writers always mess up stories, don't they?

As to the story itself, I found it to be atypical of the approach usually taken in the P-D's coverage of environmental contaminants. For example, I couldn't help but notice that the levels of PCBs found in the ink were not reported until paragraph 5, in the second column of the article. In a quick review of your reportage of dioxin findings, the levels have always been mentioned much higher up in the stories, usually in the first or second paragraph.

Naturally, I was delighted to find that this story contained none of the usual tag lines typically included in other P-D articles about PCBs, e.g., that "they are suspected of causing cancer in humans" and "they can also cause liver damage, miscarriages," etc.

Actually, as I read the story, I halfway expected to come upon a sentence saying something like: "For years, Monsanto has been claiming that PCBs are not deadly toxic or human cancer-causing agents, and we agree!" But I guess that was too much to expect.

In closing, I'll resist the temptation to say something trite like, "if the shoe fits, wear it," or even "gotcha!" I think it's more appropriate to simply welcome you to the "misery loves company" club.

Sincerely yours,

Dan R. Bishop
Director,
Environmental Communications

DRB:ec

CC: William Freivogel
Washington Bureau
St. Lous Post-Dispatch

P.S. Please don't run this in the "Letters-to-the-Editor" column. It doesn't have public relations or legal department approval.