S.G. Collins

Monsanto

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DAN R. BISHOP
Director, Public Affairs

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March 17, 1982

Mr. Robert Schofield
Environmental Correspondent
Yorkshire Post Newspapers Ltd.
Wellington Street
Leeds LS1 1RF, Yorkshire
England

Dear Mr. Schofield,

This letter will address a number of inaccurancies and grossly irresponsible statements made in your recent series of articles on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

We have seen only the first two parts, dated March 8 and 9, of your three part series. Frankly we are puzzled that on the one hand you present the use history in an authentic manner and, on the other, your references to health effects and product performance is so blatantly false.

If the whole piece had been botched, one could write it off as just another misinformed report. However, since you have some facts impeccably correct and others horrendously distorted, it almost seems that there was some overriding motive behind these contradictions.

Nevertheless you should know the following information which we would have been happy to supply earlier had you bothered to check with us:

1. There has never been a single documented case of human cancer or any other chronic long term illness attributed to Monsanto-manufactured PCB compounds anywhere in the world. We are aware of more than 24 human epidemiology studies done on groups of people exposed either through their occupation or from residing in close proximity to facilities using large quantities of PCBs. None of these studies collaborate your statements of cancer or any other chronic illness (see the attached news release of August 27, 1981).
2. In 1977, the U.S. National Cancer Institute reported that based on a lifetime feeding study in rats, PCB was not carcinogenic.

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3. Your description of the "Yusho" incident states that the average amount consumed was just two grams. The fact is the level of PCB contamination in the rice oil was 2,000 to 3,000 parts per million and these are extremely high levels .. the highest ever recorded in humans. Another fact which you failed to mention is that the Japanese-manufactured PCB material contained relatively high levels of a toxic impurity. Most scientific experts are in agreement that it was this toxic impurity and not the PCBs that caused the problems in Yusho.
4. The acute oral toxicity of PCBs is roughly the equivalent of common table salt and thus it is considered to be only mildly toxic This toxicity information clearly fails to support your claim that "even relatively minor amounts can cause anything from death to etc."
5. The quotas attributed to Mr. Wadlington of GEC are equally unsubstantiated. While he presents a novel and interesting theory, it is just that and flies in the face of a record of safe use which spands fifty plus years. As you properly noted, he is trying to sell something.
6. Mr. Bowers comment that "90 per cent of all PCB-filled units are leaking now," is pure rubbish. He's obviously trying to clean up something.

We have no such ax to grind. Our conduct with respect to PCBs is a matter of public record. The enclosed article from New Scientist describes one impartial investigators evaluation of how we handled this complicated issue.

In summary, whether intentional or not, you Sir, have done a disservice to your readers. I submit that there are enough legitimate environmental concerns over improper and irresponsible disposal of PCBs without unnecessarily alarming the public with scare statements which grossly overstate the health hazzards and the ultimate risk to man.

Sincerely,

D.R. Bishop
Director, Public Affairs

cc: Mr. Barry Sheerman, M.P.

Enclosures

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