DRAFT 5/4/77

Mr. Wayne A. Schmidt
Staff Ecologist
Michigan United Conservation Clubs
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Mr. Schmidt:

Your letter to the editor which appeared in the April 28 issue of the Detroit Free Press, while sidestepping the central issue of whether a phosphate detergent ban would actually improve the quality of Michigan's lakes, raised the question of Monsanto's "credibility" as a spokesman. If facts are to be ignored simply on the basis of who presents the information, I can see little hope for our society in trying to solve the many and complex issues facing us today.

Your statement referring to Monsanto's manufacture of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) as being indicative of the Company's "shortsighted approach to environmental quality" is certainly a charge not borne out in fact.

Contrary to your belief, Monsanto is and has been very concerned about the environmental problem posed by PCBs. It is a well documented scientific fact that no one was aware that PCBs were entering or persisting in the environment until 1970. The analytical techniques and sensitive measuring equipment necessary for detecting these compounds simply did not exist before that time.

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As soon as it was confirmed that PCBs were accumulating in the environment and long before the impact of these findings was understood, Monsanto in 1970 began restricting sales of PCBs to the electrical industry where no viable alternate materials existed.

The entire history of our involvement with PCBs and, I submit, our concerned posture in trying to deal responsibly with this very difficult risk/benefit problem is detailed in the attached material which I hope you will take the time to review.

I realize that the irresponsible and well publicized actions of a few corporations make it very easy to generalize that all businesses are bad. And I can also understand your feelings about PCBs, particularly, if your knowledge of the subject has come entirely from news media accounts which, for whatever reason, seldom bother to treat anything but the negatives.

Monsanto does care about the environment and is totally committed to operating in a socially responsible manner. We also care about the general public's preceptions of our operations. Letters like yours serve to remind us that it's much easier to accomplish the former than the latter.

Sincerely,

R. H. Miller

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