

a risk to the public health as a condition precedent to the court granting injunctive relief," Hart told the Senate, commenting: "It appears more equitable for the vendors of a chemical, who profit from its use and have superior access to pertinent data and other research resources, to carry a heavier evidentiary burden in these proceedings than the public... Further, the vendor's costs in studying the product are passed on to users of the chemical through market mechanisms, thereby spreading the costs equitably among the beneficiaries." The legislation was referred to the Senate Public Works Committee, where it will receive a hearty welcome, particularly from the Democrats. The amendment went to the Senate Commerce Committee, which will consider the Toxic Substances Act starting March 3. It was this division of jurisdiction which held up introduction of the measures. --Environmental Health Letter 14: 3-4, March 1, 1975

4/75

Dr. Joselow Challenges Validity of Monitoring Workers for Lead Exposure.

The validity of a basic government recommendation for monitoring workers for excess absorption of lead was criticized as too permissive by Dr. Morris Joselow, Associate Professor and Director of the Division of Environmental Toxicology at the College of Medicine of New Jersey. Dr. Joselow noted that a lead level of 80 microgram/100 g of whole blood is recommended as an upper limit, delineating acceptable from unacceptable lead absorption. After pointing out the technical difficulties of obtaining reliable blood lead analyses, Dr. Joselow raised the fundamental question of the toxicological basis for establishment of the numerical level. "Too many instances of damage have been found in workers whose blood lead levels are below 80 micrograms/100 g to be explained away easily," he said. "There is almost no safety factor built into the proposed limit. From a public health point of view, this is indefensible. It violates basic precepts of preventive medicine that we all espouse, and reflects unhappily on the approach to health standards followed by our government agencies." To buttress his contention, Dr. Joselow cited the results of a study by himself and colleagues Drs. Leonard Vitale and Richard Wedeen on a small population of lead workers in New Jersey. With two exceptions, all of the 27 employees showed "acceptable" blood lead levels below 80 micrograms. Yet even in this small population, other tests showed clear and unmistakable biochemical changes, and worse, four cases of lead nephropathy were uncovered though only eight workers were adequately examined for kidney disease. "The fact that such abnormalities can co-exist with 'acceptable' blood lead levels is sufficient in our opinion to cast doubt on the worth of the blood lead measurement as a reliable index of the hazards of exposure to, and absorption of lead," Dr. Joselow told the National Conference on Health Effects of Occupational Lead and Arsenic Exposure, sponsored by the Society for Occupational and Environmental Health and conducted by the University of Illinois School of Public Health.

--Occupational Health & Safety Letter 5: 7, March 8, 1975

400/75

Medical Researchers Express Concern Over Lung Ailments Due to PVC Wrap.

Medical researchers from the University of Oregon have expressed concern that fumes from plastic wrapping used to cover meat in stores, and from adhesive on the packages' labels are causing severe breathing problems among supermarket workers. Since polyvinyl chloride fumes are involved in the incidence of "meat wrappers asthma," particular concern centers on whether these workers could develop angiosarcoma, associated with vinyl chloride gas. The Oregon team discussed the respiratory problem during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy in San Diego. Researchers said they have detected no signs of liver disease so far among meat wrappers and other supermarket employees studied. Dr. Rudy H. Andrasch, of the university's division of immunology and allergy, said the fumes are activated when plastic wrap is sealed by hot plates, and when price labels are affixed with heat. The study involved 98 meat wrappers in Portland, more than two-thirds of whom complained of breathing problems when working with plastic wrap. Of that group, 55 said their respiratory discomfort was moderate to severe, including deep coughs, narrowed bronchial tubes and chest pains. Others suffered less severe symptoms. Still others complained of abdominal pains, muscle cramps, irritability, headaches and nerve problems. Many said symptoms developed after only 10-15 minutes of exposure, and lasted throughout the work shift. Andrasch said some meat wrappers continue to show signs of illness years after stopping work, indicating that continual exposure may result in chronic lung disease. Smokers showed more severe symptoms, he said. An estimated 25,000 to 30,000 workers in the U.S., including meat wrappers, butchers and supervisors, are exposed to the fumes, Andrasch said, while others run the risk of exposure as more foods become wrapped in plastic. In Oregon, lawsuits and workers' compensation claims are pending for meat wrappers asthma, he said.

--Job Safety & Health Report 5: 33, February 24, 1975

401/75

New Industrial Environmental Compliance Voluntarism Outlined by Byrd.

At least so far as environmental standards are concerned "voluntarism as we used to practice it is no longer possible," J. F. Byrd, associate director, Environmental Control Department, The Procter & Gamble Co., warns. It must be replaced by a "new voluntarism" that recognized the benefits available to the private and public sector from "a partnership relationship." He cited several reasons why industry cannot write its own