

Bommarito Calls Cancer Study Superficial

Encl 13

Summary of Testimony
Labor Department Hearing on Carcinogens Standard
By URW President Peter Bommarito
September 11, 1973
Washington, D.C.

My awareness of the potential health hazards related to the use and handling of certain carcinogens did not stem from OSHA's promulgation of the May 3, 1973 Emergency Temporary Standard of Certain Carcinogens. This awareness goes back at least a decade, and became the prime mover in our 1970 negotiations which established our current involvement in our Joint Occupational Health Program.

On April 28, 1972, Floyd Smith, International President of the IAM, members of my Staff and the IUD Staff, and I met with the Secretaries of Labor and HEW to express our grave concern regarding the lack of specific standards on certain carcinogens.

My opening remark at a press conference later that day was as follows:

"Half-hearted enforcement policies of the Department of Labor in the field of Occupational Safety and Health are subjecting an unknown number of workers to needless and highly dangerous contact with cancer producing substances."

This statement was made one year after OSHA's effective date.

2½ Years Late

Today, nearly two and one half years after the effective date, we are, in reality, just a little beyond the talking stage of a formal standard on some of the carcinogens which *may* or *already* have endangered the health of our workers. I will not attempt to rationalize the reasons for this obvious delay by the Department of Labor.

Our interest is of a direct nature. We are involved in the manufacture of rubber, plastic, linoleum type products, chemicals and even organic dyes. Our membership has a greater potential exposure to certain of the carcinogens than any other AFL-CIO, CLC National or International affiliate.

Epidemiological studies conducted during the late '40's and during the '50's in Great Britain and the United States, produced salient evi-

dence of the increased incidence of bladder cancer among rubber workers. These data have led to the prohibition of the use and manufacture of beta-naphthylamine in the State of Pennsylvania in 1960, and were also responsible for the 1968 Factory Inspectorate Act on Carcinogenic Substances in Great Britain.

Chemicals other than beta-naphthylamine were added to various other lists including the A.C.G.I.H. TLV's for 1972 and 1973 and fourteen substances were enumerated in the May 3, 1973 Emergency Temporary Standard.

Of the fourteen listed carcinogens, nine present a potential hazard to our membership.

OSHA Study Superficial

At this point, I must comment on OSHA's most recent study, "*Some Economic Aspects of an Occupational Safety and Health Standard for the use of Fourteen Carcinogenic Compounds*."

1. The study is very superficial and does not relate to the true picture of the users potential exposure and the number exposed.

2. Some of the information is not factual.

3. The information is misleading, and provides a sense of false security.

OSHA's, "Economic Aspects" report of August 10, 1973, by admission, not only does *not* reflect the potential worker exposure of URW membership, but only allows an imaginative approach to the total, "user" worker exposure in this country to the fourteen listed carcinogens. The report vaguely reflects economics of control for the large manufacturers, but does *not* reflect the cost to the worker.

An approach to our population "at risk" would start with the assumption that a least 125,000 of our members may be involved in the production or manufacture of rubber products. Of this group, a conservative estimate of the potential exposure group may number 10,000 workers. Our involvement in the urethane industry could



URW Pres. Bommarito

conceivably result in another "at risk" group of about 1,500 men or women.

Thousands At Risk

In considering operations and processes involving heated milling, calendaring, molding, and curing procedures and the potential evolution of dusts, fumes, and vapors to general work areas, perhaps the "at risk" group is considerably higher. The estimate for our present membership could approach 18 to 20 thousand potentially exposed workers.

But how can we make a retrospective estimate of workers having had potential exposures in the early 1920's or 1930's. This number could easily be many hundreds of thousands.

Perhaps the mortality and morbidity studies being conducted by Harvard's and the University of North Carolina's Schools of Public Health may provide more objective data.

How can any of us then dismiss the significance and need of a Standard on Certain Carcinogens? How can I be less than adamant in my stand when I know that now—today—the vital organs of some of my Brother and Sister Union members have already been seeded and are responding to deadly cancer?

During the testimony to be presented here within the next few days, will the real voice of the people, the voice of the worker be equally represented—or will the major testimony

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Bommarit Testimony...

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be from large corporate entities and trade and business associations which will attempt to present overwhelming data to discredit a Standard on Carcinogens as economically unreasonable, impractical, and that the continued risking of workers' lives is justified strictly on the basis of economics?

Human Experimentation

Perhaps attempts will be made to justify exploiting an uninformed work force by the capricious use of workers as experimental subjects. No qualified professional can honestly and unequivocally state with surety that humans are not "at risk" when exposed to chemicals which to date have only produced cancer in animals. Are our medical and clinical surveillance programs in this country so total, complete and sophisticated that no undetected case has slipped by? Are all observations of this nature based on only "controlled" human subjects exposures in large corporations? Have we been able to relate to the small user, who knowingly or unknowingly risks workers by indiscriminate exposures which are never environmentally, clinically, or medically monitored?

Or will we hear testimony prepared by legal advisors for clients, employers, or employer representatives who will attempt to rationalize risk of health and life to the dollars and cents of dividends paid to stockholders who would not rest easily if they knew or were aware of the "taint" on that profit dollar.

No doubt testimony will be presented that some of the chemicals in their pure state are not carcinogenic, without emphasizing that this particular chemical, as it is used today is, in reality, a mixture containing a known potent carcinogen. Will some expert play God and tell us how much of a carcinogen in a mixture is not carcinogenic?!

I have read with interest published comments regarding the activities of the Advisory Committee appointed by the Secretary of Labor. I have listened to progress reports which were periodically presented to me by the URW's Director of Industrial Hygiene, Louis S. Beliczky, who has

served as a member of the Advisory Committee. I authorized Mr. Beliczky's participation not only as a representative of Labor, but also as a representative of the Union which I serve as International President.

Stormy Sessions

Transcripts of the Advisory Committee meetings certainly indicated some stormy sessions, and at times there was a serious question as to whether or not the committee would or could ever fulfill its prescribed responsibility to the Assistant Secretary of Labor, Mr. John Stender.

The Committee's responsibilities seemed overwhelming and nearly impossible in the time framework provided. Some serious issues which were deferred by committee action were never reconsidered.

Mr. Stender's cancellation of the approved meetings for the 9th and 10th of September 1973 is considered as a serious deterrent to any final action by the committee to provide the necessary in-put for the proposed standard. The stage was set, the first two acts were completed, and the curtain was brought down before the third act finale was staged. Unless the finale is presented, the critics will never be able to judge the full action of the cast in light of their contribution to a reasonable, effective and enforceable standard on carcinogens.

It is especially important now to set the proper protocol pattern, since future considerations of other carcinogens not currently listed is imminent! To disband the committee with-

New Yorker Cites On-Job Hazards

The New Yorker Magazine, voice of silk stocking New York and sophisticates everywhere, has completed the publication of a series of articles of unprecedented length: five articles on occupational health.

Written by Paul Brodeur and called "Annals of Industry," the series began on Oct. 29 and focuses on the asbestos hazard. It demonstrates how the medical-industrial complex hides the facts, prevents real action and makes the key decisions in OSHA and NIOSH.

further in-put to the proposed standard seems to be a breach of "good faith" and could lead to the questioning of sound judgement on the part of the Office of Standards and its administrators. This action could destroy the credibility of current or future standards advisory committees.

In the time remaining, I must emphasize the need of specific reference in the proposed stand on carcinogens of the following essentials:

URW Demands

I. The absolute need of a permit system for the effective implementation of an enforceable standard. I must emphasize the Standards Advisory Committee's recommendation: "A use permit system shall be initiated as an integral part of the permanent standard to provide for effective regulation of conditions and practices concerning carcinogens to enhance the implementation of the standard."

II. The need of a National Registry of exposures to carcinogens. NIOSH's assistance in this area is envisioned. (N.B.: Items I and II are also the strong recommendations in Report VII of the ILO's 58th Session regarding the, "Control and Prevention of Occupational Cancer.")

III. The need of specific continuing scientific and technical assistance in providing reliable information on:

- A. Analytical and monitoring procedures.
- B. Medical surveillance programs and more information regarding:
 1. Carcinogenic responses
 2. Non-carcinogenic, systemic responses
 3. First aid procedures
- C. Worker and management training and indoctrination programs.
- D. Decontamination procedures.
- E. Specific protective clothing and other protective devices.
- F. Data regarding the effect of these carcinogens related to predisposing synergistic responses.
- G. Research in-put regarding tolerance-dose-time responses.

IV. The establishment of an Ad Hoc Review Committee of effective size and representation which would act in an objective advisory capacity to assist the Secretary.