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WON vinyl chloride

27 Rimmon Hill Rd.
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February 13, 1980

Mr. Patrick McCurdy, Editor in Chief
Chemical Week
1221 Avenue of Americas
New York, New York 10020

RECEIVED

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MEDICAL
DEPARTMENT

Dear Mr. McCurdy:

A letter from Mr. David N. Lawrence which appeared in the Feb. 13, 1980 issue of CHEMICAL WEEK was "sufficiently slanted to deserve some rebuttal." Mr. Lawrence ranged widely over the ills of our nation and zeroed in on the chemical industry. I cannot guess what knowledge he has of the fight on vinyl chloride, but I have a very long memory in that area from personal experience.

Some facts related to this matter are:

1. The VC-PVC industry did not have information that VC was a human carcinogen until early 1974 when Dr. Creech recognized an unusual frequency of angio-sarcoma of the liver among plant workers at a B. F. Goodrich PVC plant. There had been rising concern, worldwide, from animal data before that. A retrospective examination by some concluded that there was earlier evidence, but none of these experts had advanced the conclusion before Dr. Creech made the real connection.
2. The OSHA standard proposed a workplace limit of "non-detectable." The attorneys who prepared the standard apparently did not appreciate what this meant. It was clearly understood as the death sentence of the PVC industry by people with scientific training - hence the "tremendous uproar." The industry did fight and, in fact, won the fight when the final workplace standard for VC was set at 1.0 ppm.
3. The OSHA standard of 1.0 ppm may have been met by the major producers of VC within six months, but the compliance in the more difficult area, PVC polymer plants, was not accomplished that quickly. The cumulative effect of OSHA, EPA and FDA compliance has had a significant impact on the market price of PVC.

It has become a part of the current folklore that the chemical industry automatically fights the imposition of all regulatory standards. Whenever regulations are proposed without a reasonable scientific basis, they must be opposed, whether they be for vinyl chloride, for saccharin or for the pricing of natural gas. Those who do not seek to protect themselves against the regulatory juggernaut are likely to be crushed by it.

bcc: W/Attach.
WDHarris
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BRL(Chrono)

Very truly yours,
Benton R. Leach
Benton R. Leach

URL 16029

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A different slant

Your editorial in the January 2 issue of *Chemical Week* was sufficiently slanted to deserve some rebuttal.

You talk of "two obscure city reporters" who played a key role in ousting a President. Regardless of their worth, did *he*, in fact, deserve ousting?

It is equally important that the public learn about the petty and pettifogging members of the Supreme Court, regardless of how or where the information was obtained. Perhaps appointments to that august branch of government will be more carefully made in the future.

Chrysler (and the entire auto industry, for that matter) is going hat in hand to Washington (the public trough) because it refused to see the hand writing on the wall. The 1987 limits on pollution could be reached in 1981 if Detroit would concentrate the same efforts it has hitherto devoted to selling behemoths, to selling small four- and five-forward-gear, standard-shift cars. Check the mileage difference between a standard-shift model and its automatic counterpart—the extra weight and the inherent inefficiency in the latter show up as 20 to 30% lower gas mileage. You know it, I know it, the auto industry knows it, but they make no effort to "sell" the American public on wanting such a car.

This same industry should strip itself of all the useless frills which are power driven, and thus detract from the efficiency of the machine itself. . . .

The chemical industry has little to recommend it, either. With the recent uncovering of the Love Canal disaster, and the way in which Hooker tried to avoid possible future consequences of past carelessness there; the poisoning of the water supply in private wells near the Occidental facility in Lathrop, California, long after their own safety engineers had warned management; acid rains destroying fish in mountain lakes hundreds of miles from the point of emission; land down-wind of lead smelters made unfit for human housing or gardening; proposals to use the sea (the mother of all life on Earth!) for the "safe" disposal of nuclear wastes; and the years-long battle in the courts to prevent further dumping of asbestos fibers in Duluth's drinking water supply from taconite iron tailings.

Unless your memory is very short, you must remember the tremendous uproar aroused by the government's proposed standards of vinyl chloride emissions (which the chemical industry knew as early as 1959 were leading to an excess

of cancerous deaths). We were told that 200,000 chemical workers would lose their jobs, that the costs would be prohibitive, that the job was impossible with current state-of-the-art knowledge, etc., etc. The industry fought with their highest-priced talent, and lost. The standards went into effect, and in six months were being met by all major producers, with only minimal impact on the price of the material.

The same "weeping and moaning, and gnashing of teeth" arose with the asbestos fiber question, and continues to arise with every new standard (e.g. benzene); and while I have nothing against the legal profession, if the money spent for their fees were devoted to correcting industry's known errors of commission and omission, instead of fighting the imposition of standards, both the chemical industry and their nearby neighbors would be far healthier.

No, Mr. McCurdy, I think the giants do pretty well at protecting themselves and at least for the present, I will align myself with the pygmies.

David N. Lawrence
Purdy Station, N.Y.

You forgot us . . .

I read with dismay your article on the boom in copper production in Chile in the December 12, 1979, issue of *Chemical Week*. As the Vice President and General Manager of a company that was founded 50 years ago on the discovery of a reagent to solve the ore treatment problems at the now famous El Teniente copper mine in Chile, I find it hard to believe that *Chemical Week* could write about El Teniente without once mentioning Minerec A, which after being introduced at Teniente in 1929, is still "The Collector" for acid circuits. Even more discouraging is your reference to only the large companies, Dow and Shell. Certainly, Dow is a leader in the production of frothers, and, at \$1 million frother sales in Chile this year, cannot be overlooked. However, were you aware that Minerec A sales to Chile exceeded \$2.5 million in 1979? Granted, Minerec is not a Dow Chemical or a Royal Dutch Shell, but we are very well known to El Teniente. I hope future articles on mining chemicals will publicize all of the leading manufacturers of reagents, not just the large chemical companies.

Anthony F. Breda
Vice President
Minerec Corporation
Baltimore, Md.