

PRESS QUERY

done

COMPANY (Unit or Corporate): Corporate

SUBJECT: AMA, Dioxin & Monsanto

REPORTER & MEDIA: Sharon Cohen, Chicago AP
(312) 781-0511

TIME & DATE: 6/23/83 6:15 p.m.

QUESTION & RESPONSE:

☒ J.F. Hussey
☒ G.D. Ingenthron
☒ J.v. Morse
☒ J.T. Nolan
☐ D.R. Bishop
☐ A.N. Filippello
☒ S.Pickard-Washington, D.C.
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Reporter said she was covering the AMA Convention and had a few questions.

Q: Are You aware of the AMA's Dioxin resolution?

A: Yes, based on news media accounts I've seen and heard today.

Q: Did the AMA discuss this resolution with Monsanto prior to issuing it?

A: No. The first we knew of it was when it was reported by the news media -- we certainly applaud the resolution, however, and would hope that other independent scientific organizations will follow AMA's lead and speak out on this issue.

Q: Do you know Dr. George Bohigian, the AMA delegate from St. Louis?

A: No but I recall that he was quoted in a Globe-Democrat story today.

Q: I'm trying to find out if Dr. Bohigian is on the staff at Washington University. Do you happen to know?

A: No I don't but I've got the AMA article right here. It's an AP story out of your bureau in Chicago -- by the way. According to the story Dr. Bohigian is an associate professor of clinical opthalmology at Washington University/Barnes Hospital.

(The reporter said "Whoops!, I guess I should have read our own story.")

Q: Someone at the AMA meeting today said Monsanto gave a \$30 million grant to Washington U. Is this true?

A: Last June (1982) Monsanto and Washington U. announced an agreement. It was for \$23.5 million and five years. It involves biotechnology related research into ways that proteins and peptides might be used as new drug sources.

Q: What are proteins and peptides?

A: Substances that regulate cellular functions.

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SOURCE OF ANSWER

HANDLED BY: D.R.Bishop

Q: What is Monsanto's connection with dioxin?

A: From 1948 to 1969, at our plant in Nitro, W.Va., we manufactured the herbicide, 2,4,5-T which was a major ingredient in Agent Orange. Dioxin can be formed in trace amounts as an unwanted, unavoidable contaminant in this manufacturing process.

Q: Isn't Monsanto involved in a lot of law suits related to dioxin? Can you tell me about them?

A: Yes. We're a defendant in the Agent Orange class action law suit and we're involved in other dioxin-related cases including one brought by some employees and former employees at our West Virginia plant and another stemming from a railroad tank car spill, back in 1979 in Sturgeon, Mo.

I then said essentially the following:

From the drift of your questions, it sounds to me like you're adding 2 + 2 and trying to get 5. If you're coming from where I think you're coming from, I could see a story that goes like this:

1. AMA issues resolution downplaying dioxin's role in human health problems.
2. A co-sponsor of the resolution is on the staff at Washington U. in St. Louis.
3. Monsanto, a St. Louis company, gave Washington U. a \$23 million grant last year.
4. Monsanto generated dioxin and is now a target of several dioxin-related law suits with big bucks at stake.
5. Therefore, Monsanto "bought" the AMA resolution.

If this is, indeed, where you're going with this line of questioning, I must tell you that you're way out in left field. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Monsanto doesn't "buy" anyone's influence and the AMA doesn't sell its resolutions.

Reporter said she had to check it out because she had indeed been given this type of scenario by someone at the meeting. She indicated in a weasel-worded way that she probably wouldn't do anything with this.

I told her there was absolutely no basis for this kind of off-the-wall speculation and that I certainly hoped she wouldn't engage in this sort of irresponsible, inflammatory yarn spinning.

I then gave her a tip to check out of my own. I suggested that she might want to look into whether Dr. Bertram Carnow, the self-proclaimed dioxin expert in Chicago, ever published any of his work which purports to prove that all sorts of human health problems are linked to dioxin. I told her to check into whether he has ever submitted any of his so-called evidence to critical peer review.

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Ms. Cohen said she had heard of Dr. Carnow and just might look into it. She then asked how she could reach me later and the interview was terminated.

In a related development, Don Clayton, a member of the Washington University Medical School public relations department, was contacted on June 23 by Lee McCarthy of NBC asking about the Washington University-Monsanto agreement. According to McCarthy, the implication of conflict-of-interest was made by someone at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta who provided McCarthy with press information released at the time the agreement was made public. McCarthy then requested a complete copy of the agreement contract; Clayton refused, and McCarthy seemed satisfied. We are attempting to contact the CDC to protest this action.

D. R. Bishop

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