

Monsanto

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March 25, 1991

Editor - Letters
Science
1333 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Editor, Science

In the February 8, 1991 edition of Science, the article on dioxins included a box on page 626 with the title "Monsanto Studies Under Fire." Since reading this commentary on studies performed a decade ago by epidemiologists and physicians from Monsanto and the University of Cincinnati -- and about alleged fraudulent manipulation of data and criminal investigation -- I have been doing the proverbial "slow burn"; hence this delay in response.

Even though Science provided a Monsanto spokesman with the opportunity to firmly deny all of these allegations and so reported in the article, I am very disappointed that a publication dedicated to science would stoop to dignifying hearsay and allegations stemming from lawsuits. Despite our denials as you reported, hype such as this may raise unwarranted suspicion in the minds of some readers, despite the fact Monsanto invited an EPA/NIOSH audit of the studies in order to resolve the matters.

Especially repugnant to me was a sentence in the last paragraph which read "Everyone Science spoke with who is familiar with the Monsanto studies agrees that they are flawed, but probably not as the result of criminal intent." Who are these unidentified "experts" who, without a detailed review of the actual study, its analysis and interpretations, can render judgment on flaws (let alone gratuitously comment on criminal intent)? Are you aware that no expert -- either epidemiologist or trained public health physician -- has ever come forward to actually criticize the adequacy of these studies? Are you aware that one of the "scientific experts" quoted extensively in your dioxin article participated as an expert witness in dioxin-related suits against Monsanto and can hardly be considered disinterested? Are you aware that the allegations pertaining to the studies stem only from an attorney's argument in the courtroom, unsupported by any expert testimony or expert reexamination of the data? Finally, are you aware that a morbidity study at the same Monsanto plant --

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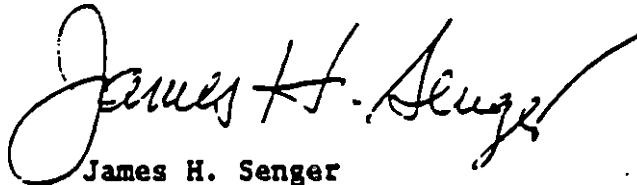
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commissioned and paid for by the union representing workers at that plant -- was conducted by Drs. Irving Selikoff, Marion Moses et al (ref: American Journal of Industrial Medicine 5:161-182 (1984)) and arrived at essentially the same conclusion reached by the University of Cincinnati: that chloracne was the only evident finding and "that it is unlikely that permanent, severe, and debilitating toxicological sequelae are inevitable after exposure to TCDD sufficient to product chloracne."

In my opinion, a publication with the stature of Science has better things to do than involve itself in the sort of half-truths, politics and litigation embodied in the mess described on page 626. The tone of the article is more befitting of a tabloid in the checkout line of a super market.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James H. Senger". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long, sweeping stroke.

James H. Senger
Vice President
Environmental Policy Staff

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bcc: D. R. Bishop
D. F. Snively
W. J. McCarville
M. A. Pierle
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