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Readers' Forum

Monsanto wants understanding

To the Editor:

A recent article by Washington correspondents Martha Angle and Robert Walters took exception to the Monsanto communications program designed to create a more balanced perspective of chemicals among the American public.

As a Monsanto employee familiar with this program, I am concerned at the article's lack of objectivity and misrepresentation of the program's objectives.

Called the "Chemical Facts of Life," Monsanto's diverse communications program was not conceived to restrict communications or gloss over chemical problems. What it is intended to do is instill a better understanding of both the risks and benefits of chemical use and to facilitate discussions between citizens and Monsanto.

Monsanto's program does involve the use of advertising to tell part of our message. Another element of the program is a speakers' bureau composed of company employees throughout the United States. These speakers, appearing before various local groups, have discussed a wide range of topics relating to the role of chemicals in our society. Other elements of the program include a series of chemical facts bulletins and a "Chemical Facts of Life" booklet exploring in detail public concerns over chemicals.

Mentioned in the article were polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and Monsanto's alleged hesitancy to discuss this subject in its CFOL program. Contrary to the article's allegations, Monsanto is and has been very concerned about the environmental problems posed by PCBs.

The entire history of Monsanto involvement with PCBs and, I submit, the company's concerned posture in trying to deal responsibly with this very difficult risk-benefit problem is a matter of public record.

Monsanto is totally committed to operating in a socially responsible manner. We also care about the public's perception of our operations. As such, we believe strongly that we have a right and, indeed, an obligation to present the risk-benefit discussion of chemicals in a clear and reasoned manner.

Gary F. Barton
Public Relations Manager
Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co.
St. Louis

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