

Monsanto

FROM
NAME-LOCATION-PHONE:

D. R. Bishop

DATE : May 11, 1983

cc.

SUBJECT : "Removing the hysteria
from dioxin"

REFERENCE :

TO : J. F. Hussey

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As you know, Dow is currently engaged in a major effort to try to "take the hysteria out of dioxin." They have two-man teams of scientists, recently trained in media interview techniques, traveling throughout the country in a media blitz. Dow also hired Hill & Knowlton to aid them in this effort. Their motives are two-fold: 1) to refute charges that they have seriously compromised health and the environment in the Midland area and 2) to articulate their position vis-a-vis the Agent Orange lawsuit.

Obviously, we could put together our own road show, employing basically the same techniques. We do have the Suskind mortality study to point to and hopefully, soon, the morbidity study which we're currently restrained by the court from exploiting.

In my opinion, Dow's efforts and, indeed, ours if we choose to emulate them, will do little more than give our management the proverbial "nice warm feeling." In the case of dioxin, we've got two very major things working against us: 1) dioxin is a completely worthless, highly toxic, unwanted contaminant, i.e., it's impossible to defend it on any logical grounds, and 2) we have virtually no credibility on this subject because of the lawsuits, i.e., the news media and the public say "What would you expect a company that is being sued for billions of dollars to say about dioxin?"

If any real progress is to ever be made in the battle to bring a sense of reason to the dioxin health debate, it is my belief that it must come from independent scientists, prestigious technical organizations like the National Science Academy and the Congressional Office of Science and Technology and the regulatory community, e.g., EPA, CDC, NIOSH, etc.

Not many people are going to believe the extreme ends of this highly polarized body of experts (Monsanto/Dow versus Epstein, et al). It's these so-called independent scientists and government experts who can make a difference -- if a way can be found to motivate them -- and that's a big IF!

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What's clearly needed is a "truce." This situation is very much out of control. A major scientific symposium might be an appropriate mechanism to bring all interested parties together. It should be jointly sponsored by organizations like the AMA, CMA, NSF, NRDC, possibly the WHO, etc.

I don't pretend to have all the answers on how this could be orchestrated, assuming it makes sense. It might be an appropriate agenda item for the Environmental Policy Committee to address -- or perhaps the CMA's Executive Committee under Lou Fernandez's leadership could take it on.

In my view, the analogy to AN in Dick Mahoney's note is inappropriate:

- 50,000 Vietnam Vets aren't suing anyone over exposure to AN.
- The CDC never said 1 ppb of AN is a health hazard.
- The government isn't buying out any towns contaminated with AN.
- AN is a highly beneficial product of commerce, notwithstanding its potential hazards.

These are my thoughts. Hope they are helpful.


Dan R. Bishop

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