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DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

November 10, 1967

To: All Members of the LIA Health and Safety Committee

Attached is a copy of a paper given by Carl Thompson of Hill and Knowlton, Inc., our public relations adviser. We think you will find this of interest, especially Carl's outline of problems that are being faced by many other industries than our own.

Very truly yours,



Don G. Fowler

DGF:sv
attachment

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Lead Roads with Lead

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Public Relations Journal, October 1967.

Action Without Words Is Useless

Environmental Health: Problems and Priorities

BY CARL THOMPSON

A JOINT MEETING of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, sections of the American Chemical Society and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers would not normally make nationwide newsworthy and major broadcast news reports. But this past May it did.

The reason: an announcement by the director of Louisiana State University's new Institute for Environmental Health Sciences that he had "found" a new "extremely toxic" substance in the environment that must be considered "a great potential hazard."

The substance was selenium, a natural element found in certain soils which gets into some plant life. He said he detected some in cigarette paper (a statement rightly calculated to make news), although not as much as in equestrian, cabbage or grass. And there is selenium in all kinds of papers which when burned "may" send selenium off into the air. Some "may" come from copper, lead and zinc smelters, and "maybe" from lead and cement plants. The glass, paint, pharmaceutical and paper industries "may" be associated with exposures to selenium. Auto and diesel exhausts need to be checked for some of the "possibilities" of selenium in them, he said.

Some 30 newspapers were alerted to this report by the Louisiana State University publicity bureau. They were invited to a press conference held the

next morning at the residence of the director of the Louisiana State University Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, who said he was "not a chemist and did not know the Environmental Health Science

afternoon before the paper was presented at the meeting. Television cameras and radio mikes were brought in.

The formal paper delivered was three pages plus some graphics. The press release about the paper ran into eight pages, and was headed "Highly Toxic Element in Cigarette Paper Discovered by Chemist." The wire services and television radio sent the news and pictures around the nation.

But the report on selenium received nothing. Said the report: "The present stage of our investigation is most preliminary and many questions remain unanswered." Readers are needed that involve a "broad interdisciplinary program of research. These studies will represent the first major effort of the newly created Louisiana State University Institute for the Environmental Sciences."

This report made good news followed by major attention in the technical news journals. Experience warns that the last has not been heard about selenium from this source. Which of the industries named in the report may be pointed at next as possibly poisoning the peninsula selenium into the air? And what should the industries do to be prepared for that?

The scientist hasn't proved that selenium is a toxin in our environment. It is a health hazard. Public Health Service officials expressed doubt about a cancer hazard. But who can say that it is not? What are the known scientific facts? What is going to develop more data?

Then was launched another environmental health hazard, happening to a number of industries in every state.

This "environmental health" is a public

new term even for scientists — is a serious and growing challenge to the public relations profession, especially in those industries which will be under scientific microscopes as contributing to health hazards in the environment.

Industrial management faces the need for vastly improved communications with the scientific community, especially with science and technical experts even in its own chain. Further direct and understandable communication is needed with a variety of other publics, all increasingly concerned about the effects which the products as well as the wastes of industrialization may have upon health. One of these publics is government officials, which is expanding its interest and activity in this area.

"The complexity of the environment and the ways it can influence man's health have been greatly enlarged as a result of population growth, urbanization, industrialization and the multiplying use of chemical substances," says one of the leading scientific investigators in the environmental field.

Within the past few years heightened attention has been focused on pollution of our air, of our water, and of land. Air pollution is an acute current topic. It is a subject that can be translated into emotional appeals and apparently simple solutions. This is possible because everybody wants pure air and water, even though neither exists in pristine nature. After the thousands of uncertainties in treating this subject have some foundation in fact.

But air pollution is only one problem and it must not be allowed to create a smog that keeps one from seeing the

handwriting in the sky. Environmental health poses broader problems than pollution control and abatement. Concern over environmental health is causing increasingly insistent demands for control over any new synthesized products that may be introduced into man's environment. Furthermore, it is fostering new scientific looks at substances and consumer items that have been around for years, even centuries, with no apparent harm.

How is one to prove that 25 years from now a product being introduced today may not perhaps have a role in a little more cancer or a little more respiratory disease or a little more heart trouble, or some other insidious effect on human health and welfare (the latter having taken on new meanings, too) or on plant life, or on the processes of nature?

"New synthetic substances can be produced faster than we can study their environmental effects," warns Professor Barry (Professor of Washington University, St. Louis, whose opinions carry great weight with decision makers. He even says that "prudence suggests the withdrawal from our surroundings of as many synthetic pollutants as possible."

SHADOWS OF FUTURE

A detailed blueprint of what the environmental health planners are shooting for was given wide attention early in June of this year and its significance for the future should not be ignored. It surely won't be by those who will continue to press for more federal involvement in environmental control.

A Task Force appointed by Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Gardner came up with an all-encompassing proposal—to cost a minimum \$2.5 billion for the first five years—to get the federal government more deeply into environmental planning. This ambitious proposal contemplated more than federal controls over the air, water, solid waste, and industrial contributions to the environment. It would also move right down into the family household to protect people from appliances they may use and from the noise, stress and accidents of the home.

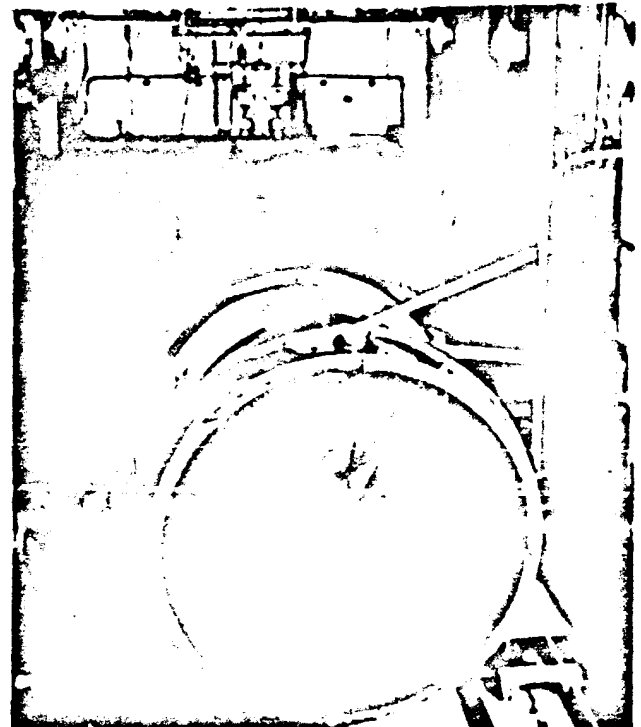
That this plan won't be adopted immediately is now gone without saying. But those who watch the Washington scene have the sense that a set of principles will be before the policy and action planners. They grab a pencil here and a piece there (gradually they build up a case for putting parts of the whole into action). The long-term campaign for "Modicare" is a good example. Some of the same people who were advocates of similar medical plans 30 years ago were in on the final campaign that led to its recent adoption.

The so-called Limon report (after Task Force Chairman Ron Limon, who sharpened his knowledge by serving with the Senate Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution) runs to 106 pages and warrants study by all industrialists, even though some of the reasoning is superficial. For one example, the report calls for re-examination of all recently introduced synthetics, trace metals and chemicals, and for the actual pro-

cedure.

The report recommends an Environmental Protection System to be given broad authority by a proposed Environmental Protection Act, with top planning and advice coming from a new Council of Ecological Advisors to the President, to lend White House authority to the programs developed.

Even more relevant, an Environmental Information Clearing House



Lab technicians prepare data for low temperature operations to test performance of fuels of burning substances. Used on burner simulators on the road and conditions.

hibition of any new substances of this nature after 1970 unless tested and approved by EPHW. Yet, the major example given to prove the need for this is the notorious radium watch dial painters who inked their brushes while at work—a classic example of occupational hazard but hardly one to prove hazards to the general public of new substances introduced into environment.

In any case the report calls for a massive program of research and controls in an active the broad function of air, water, solid waste, noise and stress pollution of environmental health and safety programs of critical and stand aside for physical and mental health. It is planning when development and transportation of clothing, color, and in

should be created to carry the message out past through mass media and other broad means but with planned programs from the nation's schools from kindergarten through adult education classes.

Much of what the report advocates is, of course, already going on. At the Research Triangle in North Carolina (according to the Division of Environmental Health Sciences of the National Institutes of Health) the rapidly expanding research is getting nearly \$20,000,000 this year—its first full year of formal operations. Research is already planned or being carried out on pesticides, heavy metals and trace elements, lung cancer, radiation of growth, nutrition, organ systems, reproductive behavior, miscarriages, and perinatal and simulating agents.

"Health risks may be associated with exposure to environmental agents of all forms—chemical, physical, and biological—entering the host (meaning mainly people) through all portals—skin, respiratory tract and gastrointestinal system," is the philosophy behind the research planned on environmental agents by the Environmental Health Sciences Division.

The Research Triangle will also be the new use of the expanding National Center for Air Pollution Control, another segment of the Public Health Service, which is also greatly stepping up its research and control programs, especially in the area of industrial air pollution.

PUBLIC RELATIONS INFORMATION

A sound public relations program for environmental health problems in with other sound public relations programs, starts with policy decisions and actions. Some of the basic elements of such a program are:

1. Assigning the responsibility for being alert to what is being done and what about products, substances, or practices that may have an effect on health. This is important because many troubles can be anticipated before they have full-blown in the scientific or public press.

In recent years an increasing number of major companies and industry groups have designated a top policy official to be responsible for all phases of activity relating to environmental health. Some may be called "Coordinator of Air and Water Pollution Control," or some such title; others may be designated as "Coordinator of Environmental Control," with broader connotations.

A major program of scientific research and communication was set up a couple of years ago in the American Petroleum Institute with the establishment of a Committee for Air and Water Conservation. Many other industry organizations have similar programs. The Manufacturing Chemists Association has been conducting an intensive research information and action program for its members for some years. The Soap and Detergent Association also has a continuing program for its members. The American Iron and Steel Institute and its member companies have accelerated their programs. For example, on pollution abatement efforts of the steel companies in the Chicago area were praised recently from Chicago's Mayor Daley appearing before the House Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution of the U.S. Senate. (There is doubtless are stepping up their activities or initiating new programs.)

The task of keeping up with all information—current past and future—



Treated waste water from oil refinery attracts fish because of higher oxygen content.

relating to an industry's problem is to staff a formidable one. Dozens of medical and scientific journals and books should be perused monthly, in addition to programs of scientific meetings, some of which can be monitored as they happen.

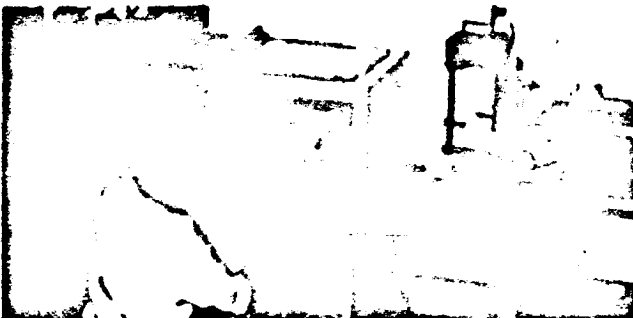
2. Collecting and analyzing available facts on possible problem areas. If facts are scarce or if there are major areas of unanswered questions, research should be aimed at either "in-house" or outside to get the required knowledge. If remedial preventive measures are indicated—for example, for air or water pollution abatement—these measures should be undertaken as quickly as possible, with provision given to the most likely problem sources.

To illustrate, a few years ago some research indicated the presence of suspect compounds in a coating for food containers. No direct or even indirect health effects were shown. However, because of communication between the investigating scientists and the industry involved, research steps were undertaken to find ways to alter the formula for the coating so as to remove the suspect, as a subsidiary and preventive measure. And this was done. Although

the original research findings were published and given some general attention, no major excitement developed because (a) prompt remedial action eliminated the problem and because (b) in public communications it was always carefully pointed out that no adverse health effects had resulted. There was, in this instance, no dire prophecies of "what might happen if..."

Sometimes the research can be integrated with existing industry research. An example is the International Lead Zinc Research Organization, Inc., which has a major research program on product uses and development, but which also incorporates medical research about these metals and their uses in relation to the environment and their possible effects, one way or another, on health. For instance, lead and cadmium have shown to be an extremely important factor in the fast healing of burns and other wounds, especially those occurred on the battlefield.

Other research may be done jointly by different industries, such as a project on sulfur oxides reported that is being carried out at the U.S. Laboratories in Boston. Financed together by Edison Electric Institute, the Brunswick Coal



Bath in exposure chamber for studying effects of air and water pollution.

Research, Inc., the American Petroleum Institute, and the U.S. Public Health Service.

Obviously, research planning itself is the responsibility of qualified scientists and technicians. However, public relations should be prepared to make suggestions on priorities and areas of most public interest and concern. Public relations can also help in analyzing existing data and helping to interpret what it does or does not mean, so that proper decisions for action can be made. The scientists themselves could sometimes benefit, if they would, by help from good experienced science writers in the public relations profession.

3. *Preparing usable informational materials on subjects that may be coming in for public attention.* Most environmental health subjects involve discussion of complex and sometimes conflicting scientific studies. These need to be carefully simplified, without distortion, so that there can be better understanding of why something that may appear to be "wrong" isn't corrected right away. The fact is there are very few black and white "right" and "wrong" in this intricate problem. Sometimes only a very small minority of individuals may be even susceptible to health hazards from an environmental exposure. The so-called "time dose relationship" is a particularly difficult one to evaluate. Almost anything in our environment over a long enough period of time could probably affect the health of a susceptible group. The most logical solution, some experts believe, is to make sure that man's exposures (which he cannot avoid) are kept low enough so that there will be no adverse effect during his life span. Those who may be particularly susceptible, or unduly exposed, say for reasons of occupation, require special protection. In any case, government health officials are making it abundantly clear that they see it as their duty to provide a level of protection that will reach even a minority of one.

It is difficult to keep such problems in perspective for the average man who may be frightened by headlines telling him he may be exposed to radiation from his television set, when in fact such radiation is probably meaningless and is readily corrected.

Technical material and explanatory information need to be translated into the usual informational materials that lay, ill-informed, school-graduating adults and the like depend upon for the scope of the problem. The large and important American for example, in cooperation with the League of Women Voters, produced an excellent film on water conservation and treatment which discussed the relation to the aesthetic

(but nonhealth) problem of foaming detergents.

4. *Taking the initiative in telling the positive story of what is being done.* Most industries has been grappling with air, water and solid waste disposal problems for many years, but have, in general, been reticent in telling the story to the public, for a number of reasons. As a result, the public now has little conception of the complexities and the unknowns involved in air and water conservation practices. Most companies and industries are now more willing to speak out, frankly and positively. A major company recently announced it had installed equipment to control some 90 per cent of its emissions, admitting that formerly it had controlled something less than 50 per cent but pointing out correctly that the technology for greater control just had not existed before.

5. *Being prepared to carry out a policy of challenging over-sensationalized events.* This is vital because speculative theories can become accepted as hard fact if they are repeated often enough without dissent.

Professor Abel Wolman of Johns Hopkins, an able chairman in environmental health problems, gave some recognition to this concept when he said that the search for effective control measures is "currently handicapped by the situation of statements on the subtle manipulations of unknown diseases of unknown origin, at some unknown future date." It should be possible to turn aside, now, from the propaganda to the scientific and technological means to the environment.

Many experts would agree with this analysis. Industry must continue its strength to meet its responsibility in helping to resolve the real problems. But in doing so, it must also be prepared to deal with what often is the other two-thirds of these problems—the hysteria sometimes fanned by the informed as well as the uninformed and the propaganda that is generated for a variety of purposes, sometimes by groups with vested interests in competing or any of industry. There is need for intelligent conversation about as well as conservation of our environmental resources.

ATTN: BUT WOMEN TALK

Professor Wolman's first talk had been for a day and then the paper returned to reporting inside theories and health charges in the popular press. The more widespread the use of a substance the more seriously business reports—even a suggestive report—that this substance may be a health hazard usually for a few normally susceptible people brought and set

food and drink, even hard and soft water, and now the air we breathe, are all being implicated in one way or another with cancer, heart disease, or some other, usually chronic, ailment of mankind.

The role of publicity and public relations in government's dealing with environmental health problems was conspicuously illustrated during a three-day Washington, D.C. Conference on Air Pollution last December, sponsored by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Usual steps were pulled out to get widespread publicity on the conference. In addition, representatives of print and broadcast media were brought in for participation in the conference sessions, and the final summation was assigned to a well-known radio and television news commentator, who was currently working on an air pollution documentary.

It is not surprising that writers—science and otherwise—turn to government sources for information relating to problems of industry, for that is where the information and action traditionally are. But industry has an opportunity to speak out, too. Many important segments of industry are carrying up not only their actions but also their informational programs.

At a recent National Industrial Conference Board symposium on what industry is doing about pollution abatement, several industry spokesmen emphasized the need for good public relations programs as an accompaniment to abatement programs.

Speaking for the American Petroleum Institute, P. M. Combs, director, Committee for Air and Water Conservation, outlined the normal program of important research of his group, but he also emphasized the program of information concerning air and water conservation that is being carried on. Similarly, Dr. Allen Brand of Bethlehem Steel stressed along with description of actions being taken and planned, the need for telling what is being done. "If not informed otherwise," said Dr. Brand, "it is simply human nature and common sense for the affected public to assume nothing is being done."

And R. M. Billings of Kimberly-Clark Corporation: "Take every possible opportunity to present the facts of the pollution problem to the general public. This is a most important policy. It takes time and it costs money, but people cannot make intelligent decisions unless they have the facts and these must include industry facts. We have all been taught to hold our breath without action to high concentrations. I am convinced, however, that action without words is almost as useless." []