PUBLIC RELATIONS - EUROPE

PRESS QUERY

SUBJECT: PCB in Maendy Quarry, South Wales.

SOURCE OF ANSWER: A. Vodden, Ruabon
D. Shearn, Newport
P. Marsh, Brussels

COMPANY: Monsanto Industrial Chemicals Co. operating unit.

HANDLED BY: E. Bracken, London

REPORTER & MEDIA: Peter Pringle, Sunday Times.

DATE: May 4, 1973. 11.45 a.m.

BACKGROUND

Following interviews with ourselves and others on April 26 (see Press Query Report of that date), the Sunday Times did not feel they had sufficient information to publish the following Sunday and came back to us with further supplementary questions on Friday afternoon. At the outset of this telephone conversation, we pointed out that this was a complex subject that could not be adequately dealt with by phone and repeated our offer to meet with Sunday Times reporters. They replied that, as they were aiming for publication May 6, there was not time for this.

Q. When Monsanto made tests on water drawn from Maendy quarry, were there any variations in the level of PCB depending on whether the weather was wet or dry?

A. Most of our analytical work was done on samples from Brofiskin quarry. We only tested one water sample from Maendy, so have no comparisons.
Our experts, however, advise us that they would anticipate little difference. Our tests on water from Brofiskin all show PCB levels in the same range of .01 to .06 ppm, because it is the solubility of PCB, and not the amount of water, which dictates the level.

Q. Who did you send these results to?

A. From Maendy quarry, we did not send the result to anyone. It was for our own information, although we would have provided this information to official bodies if asked. Information on our tests of samples taken from Brofiskin were given verbally to a representative of the Department of Environment, who also took their own samples for analysis by, we understand, the Government Chemist.

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Q. Precisely during which period did you co-operate with the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office?

A. We have maintained steady contact - about five or six times in the last year - with a representative of the Department of the Environment. We understand that the Department of the Environment are also acting for the Welsh Office in this matter, but detailed information on this would have to come from the Department of the Environment.

Q. What was the nature of this co-operation?

A. We provided statistics on production and sales from our Newport plant, details of patterns of sales, where Aroclor was used, how it was disposed of, etc. Because the level of PCB in question was bordering on undetectable levels, we also offered advice and help, if required, on analytical techniques.

Information about our programme of controlled sales outlets and the experience we have gained worldwide in the handling and disposal of Aroclor and Pyroclor worldwide was given to the Department of the Environment and used in their paper on Control of PCB Pollution in the U.K., which was submitted to the OECD sector group on the Unintended Occurence of Chemicals in the Environment.

At this point, further questions were asked which indicated that, despite previous lengthy conversations, Pringle still did not have a full understanding of some of the basic principles of the PCB situation, or Monsanto's role in it. In a subsequent telephone conversation with the newspaper, it emerged that they had abandoned the chance of publishing on May 6, and it was agreed that the matter be held in abeyance pending a meeting between Sunday Times representatives and Monsanto experts during the following week (exact date and time yet to be fixed).

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