

William Niehous: back in the action.

Niehous returns to Owens-Illinois

William F. Niehous, held for more than three years by leftist guerrillas in the Venesuelan jungle, is back on the job for Owens-Illinois—now administering the company's domestic R&D budget of more then $62 million.

Niehous, 48, was kidnapped from his home in Caracas on Feb. 27, 1976, and finally escaped on June 29, 1979 when police stumbled onto his captors' hiding place while looking for horse-thieves. Niehous had previously held positions for Owens-Illinois in Spain and Mexico.

"I did not undergo a religious experience to become a born-again Christian during my period of captivity," Niehous told the annual convention of the American Society for Industrial Security in Detroit last week. "But if such an experience can increase one's faith in God, then mine increased a hell of a lot."

Niehous started last week as director of administration for corporate technology at Owens-Illinois' headquarters in Toledo, O. He is responsible for technical planning, project and budget control and personnel in the 1,300-strong Corporate Technology Dept. □

Allied settles Armco coke-oven lawsuit

Allied Chemical last week agreed in principle to pay about $34 million in cash and property to Armco Inc. as part of an out-of-court settlement of three suits involving the Ashland, Ky., plant of Allied's Semet-Solvay division. The agreement, still subject to approval of the boards of directors of the companies, calls for Allied to pay $20 million in cash (*see also p. 64*). Armco first sued Allied for $217 million in 1976.

Agreement was reached in a pretrial conference on one of the suits. A trial had been set for Oct. 22 in federal court in Catlettsburg, Ky.

Included in the agreement is cancellation of a contract under which Allied would have to provide coke to Armco through Oct. 31, 1980. □

Ver Hoeve resigns as Velsicol president

Raymond W. Ver Hoeve, president and chief operating officer of Velsicol Chemical, resigned last week to, as one source puts it, accept "a more lucrative offer" as executive vice-president of Texas United Corp. Velsicol says a replacement has not been chosen.

Ver Hoeve had figured prominently—along with Chairman Paul F. Hoffman and Ben W. Heineman, president of Velsicol's parent, Northwest Industries—to promote "the new Velsicol," a mission to polish up the company's tarnished public image (*CW, Aug. 23, 1978, p. 50*).

Meanwhile Hoffman told employees "a significant downturn" in the company's fortunes over the last few months was due to "a variety of worldwide business conditions.

"We have hit a snag with sales of some of our product lines and are particularly affected by the loss of EPN [ethyl, nitrophenyl phenylphosphonothioate] sales domestically," he said. "Expected insect invasions in the U. S. simply have not materialized."

Hoffman also attributed the problems to "across-the-board increases in raw-material prices and soaring interest rates."

As part of the belt-tightening, the company has closed the Bayport, Tex., plant which produces the fruit and cotton pesticide. A company representative says privately that it may be reopened in January if the high inventory is reduced in coming months. The plant was recently repaired after being damaged by an explosion and fire (*CW, Jan. 17, p. 28*).

Separately, Velsicol is reportedly near a settlement with 75 Michigan farmers suing over polybrominated biphenyls mixed accidentally with livestock feed in 1973. Fred Boncher, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, says Velsicol has agreed to pay the farmers "several million dollars" to drop the suits. Velsicol confirmed a settlement was pending. □

PCBs found in chickens and eggs

PCB contamination found in chicken meat meal forced Idaho and Utah health officials last week to destroy about 400,000 chickens and more than a million eggs.

A PCB leak from a reserve transformer damaged by a loading vehicle was pinpointed as the source of contamination in animal-meat meal manufactured by Pierce Packing Co. (Billings, Mont.).

The accident that caused PCB to seep into a 10x20-foot area of the plant was never reported, according to Kenneth Poggi, Pierce president.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration determined that meat meal processed at the plant in June was contaminated. That meal was sold to 15 customers, including five feed brokers, in at least seven states. The company recalled all the feed it had produced since June. Deliveries were principally in Montana, North Dakota and Oregon. The damaged transformer was a backup for four others put into service in 1972, before the government banned PCBs. □



EPA's Costle welcomes help on wastes.

EPA head will make CMA study public

During a wide-ranging interview with McGraw-Hill editors in New York last week, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Douglas Costle said EPA welcomes the Chemical Manufacturers Assn.'s technical assistance program on "orphaned" waste sites (*CW, Sept. 19, p.*

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