PRESS QUERY

COMPANY (OpUnit or Corporate): MIC

SUBJECT: PCB

REPORTER & MEDIA: Bob Walters (Washington Newspaper Enterprise) Writes a column with his wife called "Martha Angle & Robert Walters" that is distributed to 600 newspapers.

TIME & DATE: September 20, 1979 - 11:50 a.m.

X K. W. Easley
X J. R. Foehr
X E. H. Harbison
X L. A. Miller
X J. Ortiz

X News Bureau
X J. T. Nolan
X J. E. McKee
X J. v. Morse
X D. R. Bishop
X W. J. McCarville
__ W. R. Mulhall
X J. F. Hussey-Washington, D.C.
X S. Pickard-Washington, D.C.
__ New York Public Relations
__ Brussels Public Relations
__ MAP PR
__ MCI PR
X MIC PR G. Young
__ MP & R PR
__ MTC PR
__ INT'L PR
X E. T. Mollica
X J. C. Weber
X F. G. Wohlschlaeger
X D. Wood

Mr. Walters states he is doing a follow-up column to his June 1978 article (attached). His thrust is that there have been three major PCB contaminations of animal feed in the 1970s (the latest in Montana and Idaho) and when Monsanto is asked what we're doing about it, we say it's a federal government problem. This "let Uncle Sam do it" philosophy is in direct conflict with the speeches of Mr. Hanley and other Monsanto executives that there is too much federal regulation.

Q. What is Monsanto going to do about these similar transformer leaks in animal feed?

A. It's more what industry and government are doing together. Monsanto voluntarily began phasing out its sales as soon as it became apparent that PCBs were being detected in the environment. As of April 18, 1978, all large transformers were required to carry a label saying PCBs is the coolant. The EPA has detailed regulations for what to do in case of accidental leakage or replacement and ultimate disposal of PCB. Commercial labels are readily available and the law is in effect. I don't know what Monsanto could do beyond this identification and safe disposal program.

Q. I'm going to take a shot at you guys because of the fascinating position you've taken when you want to lay the PCB problem at the doorstep of the feds. Monsanto has been vocal in saying there is too much federal regulation; then when you get a bummer like PCBs, you say let the EPA take care of it. Why?

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A. We don't think that Monsanto could be more effective than the federal government in contacting ultimate users and enforcing the labeling and safe disposal of the PCBs. The government is in a better position than a private company in notifying transformer owners of what to do. Certainly we have no enforcement authority. It seems to me that EPA has the rightful role to be involved in this area.

Q. I think this is a good example of why we need a "super fund" when industrial chemical companies won't take responsibility.

What happened to the incinerator proposals that Monsanto was promoting a couple of years ago? What facilities to you have?

A. Explained that we no longer have an incinerator. It's our intention to use huge commercial incinerators. Explained why we shut down our incinerator.

Q. What was your annual production of PCBs before 1960 and 1971-1977?

A. To my knowledge we do not have sales records from the early years of production. I can tell you that domestic production peaked in 1970 and steadily declined as we voluntarily implemented a phase-out program. In the last several years of production before discontinuing sales in 1977, PCB was a small business and the only applications were capacitors and transformers.

Q. Is Monsanto willing to provide production numbers beyond that in your press release?

A. I don't believe we have the early production figures going back to 1929; and no, we will not release any of the post-'71 production figures because as I've already said, they decreased rapidly.

Q. My last question is really a cheap shot, in your press release of 1970, which was your first public announcement, you stated that this was "scare tactic and sensational headlines...etc.", do you stand behind that?

A. (Reread first sentence of news release.) When the first sentence is used in its entirety, we stand behind the statement. (attached.)

Q. Reviewed CFOL campaign elements and said we are a sitting duck because we produced a bummer and are noticeably silent about PCBs and are trying to walk away from it. Comment?

A. I'm proud of the way Monsanto acted through the period since PCBs were found to be environmental contaminants and until we ceased production in 1977. As soon as the fluid replacement technology was available, we withdrew from the business before there was any legal or regulatory requirement. Our timetable for withdrawal had the endorsement of the federal government; and then EPA Administrator, Russell Train, said he would not ask Monsanto to stop PCB production because that would shut down the electrical power industry and railroads in short order.

Q. One final question, why is there no after-market concern; Monsanto has washed its hands, right?

A. No, I wouldn't agree with that. (Reviewed Monsanto funded studies with two universities to explore innovative approaches to getting PCBs out of the environment -- and it's not just Monsanto, the government and transformer manufacturers are looking at innovatives ways to aid in PCB cleanup.)

Source of Answer: Notes

Handled By: R. C. Isham