E V John

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REPORT

THE CHEMICAL TIP AT MAENDY QUARRY :

For MONSANTO CHEMICALS LTD.,		Mr. E. Bracken	
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JOHN DARREN:

And now, the latest development in the row over Maendy Quarry near Pontypridd. Where dangerous chemicals are alleged to have been dumped. Local members of Plaid Cymru have erected notices warning people to keep away from the partly fenced dump. The move follows a request to the Welsh Office for official warning signs to be erected at the quarry site. A Plaid spokesman said that as no action had been taken, they had decided to put up their own warning signs as a matter of urgency. The spokesman added that access could easily be gained to the tip. And meanwhile, in the Commons today, The Secretary of State, Mr. - The Secretary for Wales, Mr. Peter Thomas, is answering a question about chemicals that have been dumped in the quarry. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Brynmor John, the M.P. for Pontypridd, are in our London studio now and they're talking to Patrick Hannan.

PATRICK HANNAN:

Can I clear one point first of all, Secretary of State, is it the case that there are poisonous chemicals in this dump at Maendy?

PETER THOMAS:

Ob yes. There's no doubt that there must be many poisonous chemicals in this dump. There has been the deposit of material in that dump for many years. Five years up to 1970.

P.H:

But what you're saying is, they're causing no danger to life?

P.T:

No, what I'm saying is that we have investigated as fully as we can the question of any seepage from the dump and the effect of the seepage. On things like the water supply and the evidence points to no immediate public danger. I think it's very important to say so.

P.H:

The - no immediate public danger. But can you be sure that there will be no public danger at all.

P.T:

No. One cannot be sure - that is why we intend to keep monitoring and investigating and there will be long term research.

P.H:

You see, until - what strikes me is until you've finished your research, how can you be certain now that there is no public danger?

P.T:

Because there has been very careful analysis and investigation of

all the allegations that have been made.

P.H:

But there might be public danger let's say tomorrow.

P.T:

No. It may well be that some substance will be found to be escaping, which will constitute a public danger. If we were to find that, I would not hesitate to act at all. My responsibility is to see that there is no public danger. That is the responsibility I intend to discharge. On the other hand, I'm very anxious that there shouldn't be exaggerated fears and, in particular, exaggerated fears which don't go unanswered.

P.H:

Well, how long will you go on testing and monitoring?

P.T:

Oh, we intend to have a long term research and, in fact, these tips and other tips in the country are going to be investigated over a long period of time.

P.H:

Do you anticipate then that you will, in fact, be doing something about this tip because there is poisonous waste there?

P.T:

I don't know. All I know at the moment is that as far as the public are concerned, there is no - nothing that they should be concerned about as far as the water supply and I was able to announce today, in the House, that investigation has been made of milk from animals who are grazing near the tip. People are very concerned that there might be a substance known as PCB in the milk and the Glamorgan analyst reported to me today that there is no evidence at all.

P.H:

Secretary of State, thank you very much. Let me turn now to Mr. Brynmor John, the Labour M.P. for Pontypridd. Mr. John, you've heard the Secretary of State now and in the House of Commons. Are you satisfied with his answer?

BRYNMOR JOHN:

No, I'm not.

P.H:

Why not?

B.J:

Well, at the end of the day, despite the assurances of the Secretary of State about the effect of the Government analysis, there is unresolved, a dispute between the experts as to what is - are the levels of toxidity in the tip and what are the likely effects of that.

P.H:

But the Secretary of State has said in the House of Commons that you're sensationalising this. That you're exaggerating the problems.

B.J:

Yes, well there are two points here. The first point is that I, myself, warned the local residents about over-reaction on Wednesday. And if the Secretary of State were fair he would acknowledge that I have raised the matter over a period of two years and have done so in a way that gave the Welsh Office every chance of answering without alarming the public at all.

P.H:

But, since tests and monitoring have been carried out, can't you now be satisfied that no one is, in fact, in any danger?

B.J:

Well, as I have said, there is still the unresolved dispute and I believe that what should be undertaken is an integrated and thorough investigation of this tip, involving the Department of the Environment and involving all the expertise which we can command in this country to analyse the contents of the tip and to monitor their effects.

P.H:

But, are you asking for some short-term thing to be done to prevent this seepage coming out?

B.J:

Well, I think that a short and thorough investigation of the tip is required before we can say what steps are necessary to prevent seepage. But, certainly, as a followup to the investigation I envisage that action ought to be taken if it is found to be necessary.

P.H:

But you're not arguing now against Welsh Office evidence that people are in immediate danger?

B.J:

Well, I - what I am saying is that there is a default of opinion between experts who are much better qualified than I am to talk about it. Where that difference of opinion exists, it must be resolved as quickly as possible so as to satisfy the people living in the area.

P.H: Mr. John, thank you very much indeed.

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