

DIOXIN : Dow goes to work on a contamination problem and a credibility gap

DOW Free Press June 5 '79

DOW Chemical's offer of \$2.5 million for dioxin studies is a welcome acknowledgment of the public concern over the possible effects of the chemical, not to mention the damage the dioxin controversy has done to Dow's image. The studies, if they are carried out under conditions that assure their integrity, should help to remedy both problems.

State officials obviously have to clarify the conditions under which state agencies can accept Dow's offer. The results of Dow's own dioxin research in the past have been questioned by those who disagreed with their methodology or scope. The company must realize already the need to involve some of its critics in the design of the proposed studies, well before they begin, so that the results cannot be dismissed or discredited, whatever they show.

Dow is still under a mandate to provide information on its manufacturing processes and discharges to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and that flow of information should continue. The company's concern about the confidentiality of its manufacturing processes is legitimate, and the EPA should find a way to respect it.

Beyond the Dow-dioxin case lie the larger unsolved problems of how to deal with a multitude of other suspected carcinogens in the environment; how to lessen the adversary relationship between industry and government, which hinders scientific



Dow Chemical plant

when science simply doesn't provide the answers fast enough for society to make the proper decisions. It will be a long time before those problems are worked out. In the meantime, Dow's willingness to cooperate with state government in exploring and defusing this specific issue is an important bit of progress.