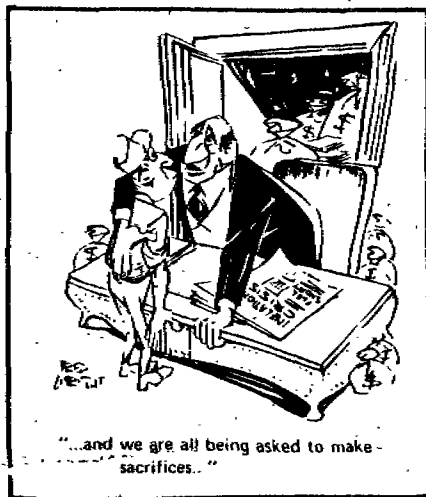


POSTAL WORKERS NEED OUR SUPPORT

RSV0024696

Please See Page 5



THERE'S A MIGHTY EFFORT UNDERWAY TO TURN PUBLIC SENTIMENT AGAINST POSTAL WORKERS.

The 4 major postal unions (Letter Carriers; Postal Workers; Mailhandlers; & Rural Letter Carriers) & the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) are bargaining over a contract to replace the current 3-year pact ending July 21. Past New Unitys have reported on the postal workers' major needs (5/78) & the possibility that management will force a strike & a lousy contract on them (6/78).

The unions' announced goal of a \$1965/year raise (in 2 steps, July '78 & July '79) has become "number 1 on President Carter's hit list." (The press described this as a 14% raise; in fact, for most postal workers, it will be around 12%. New Unity doubts that it will keep up with the cost of living, even when combined with the Cost of Living Allowance that postal workers receive.)

Carter claims he'll depend on "voluntary restraint of both labor & management" to control inflation. But his announced intention to limit government workers to a 5 1/2% raise is, in fact a decision to impose wage controls on government workers & set a pattern for all workers.

LYING WITH STATISTICS

Carter has unleashed various bureaucrats in an attack on postal workers' demands. His Council on Wage & Price Stability claims that postal wages are 45% higher than the average for all

non-farm workers. This just proves the innocent level of most workers' wages.

Media guns have been firing too. Conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick claimed May 23 that postal wages are 33% higher than "comparable" jobs. His source was the Adie report from the American Enterprise Institute (AEI).

Kilpatrick failed to note that the

AEI is a right-wing Republican think-tank & that Adie's "comparable" jobs were in banking, insurance, telephone, & electric utilities.

The largely non-union banking & insurance industries pay notoriously poor wages. They pull down the average when lumped in with telephone & electric utilities, which pay 50% more than financial industries. Adie's statistics, & the Council's as well, are worthless--except to stir up resentment against postal workers.

A better comparison was done by the U.S. Commission on Postal Service. It found no difference between the postal average & the group-average for steel, auto, transportation, & communications.

Meanwhile, United Parcel Service workers get about 20% more than postal workers. And the Labor Department's Intermediate Budget for a City Worker Family of 4 is about 10% higher than the average postal worker's income.

HIGHER PRICES CAUSE HIGHER WAGES

Carter blames wages for inflation. The historic pattern, however, is one of raises trying to catch up with prices. And even Postal Service wages have fallen behind the inflation.

Postal workers get a Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA). But that only made up 55% of what inflation stole from their purchasing power over the last 3 years. Negotiated raises in the basic pay schedule have helped keep close to inflation. But raises are supposed to improve your lot, not just keep up with inflation.

USPS HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY

From 1970 to 1977 the workforce declined by 12%, while total mail volume increased 9%. Productivity jumped 23% over 140,000 pieces of mail per employee. It jumped over 6% in 1977 alone. Few other industries show any such feats.

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FOR A SUBSCRIPTION FOR YEAR(S) UNDERSTAND THAT \$2.00 PER YEAR PAYS FOR NEWSPAPER COSTS OF PRODUCTION.

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NEW UNITY BOX 891

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RELATED TOPICS: SEE PAGE 2

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Making Monsanto Pay Is Tough

IN LATE NOVEMBER 1973 CLARENCE MESSIER WAS DYING.

Neither he, his wife Alice, his doctor, nor his Springfield co-workers knew he might be dying from chemicals at the big Monsanto plant in Indian Orchard.

But 2 months later, the world learned that vinyl chloride, a widely used material in the plastics industry, could cause fatal cancer. Messier made polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic out of vinyl chloride gas. So Alice Messier asked Springfield lawyer Morton Sweeney to file a Workers' Compensation claim.

Still, Messier's death certificate made it seem doubtful that vinyl chloride had anything to do with his death. The publicity in the media suggested that the only illness known to come from vinyl chloride exposure was a very rare liver cancer. Messier's doctors said he died from cirrhosis of the liver caused by a virus infection.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Messier went ahead with her claim. And in 1976, Monsanto agreed to settle.

The cause of her husband's death remains uncertain, as we'll see below. But the case is still significant--especially for chemical workers, their families, doctors, & lawyers.



CIRRHOSIS-LIKE DISEASE FROM VINYL CHLORIDE

Right up until September 1976, Monsanto fought the claim, resting its case on the death certificate. Monsanto said there was no occupational disease involved, because vinyl chloride has never been shown to cause cirrhosis of the liver.

Actually, it was known in 1974 that several cases of liver cancer had been originally misdiagnosed as cirrhosis.

Then, by late 1974, medical investigators were finding strong evidence that cancer is not the only disease related to vinyl chloride. A non-cancerous disease from vinyl chloride exposure might well be killing more people than liver cancer.

And this disease has probably been mistaken by doctors for cirrhosis in vinyl chloride workers.

Dr. John Lewis was an expert-witness for Messier against Monsanto. (Lewis investigated reports of cancer deaths among Monsanto-Springfield employees while working for the state Occupational Hygiene Division in 1976. His efforts helped precipitate a federal study that is currently underway here.)

He described the symptoms of this non-cancerous disease as the same as cirrhosis: "The patients look just like cirrhosis, & they die just like cirrhosis."

Expert pathologists found the disease in the livers of workers both with & without liver cancer. It's a thick, scar-tissue-like growth.

"Most pathologists, seeing that growth, would say, 'That's cirrhosis,'" Lewis comments. "Only a few in the country can tell the difference. And they say that's not cirrhosis. Instead they call it a 'fibrosis of the liver' that's distinctive in vinyl chloride workers."

RULING ALCOHOL OUT

Messier's doctors were faced with a choice of 3 possible causes of what they saw as cirrhosis: "hepatitis," or swelling, of the liver: alcohol, chemicals, or an infection due to a virus.

Alcohol was out, because Messier did not drink. Even if Messier were an alcoholic, many alcoholics don't get cirrhosis. This suggests that other factors are involved. The other factors, Lewis argues, are often chemicals that people are exposed to in their work.

But in November 1973 the chemical connection was unknown. So Messier's family doctor, John Flahive, went along with a Mercy Hospital lab report that attributed the hepatitis to a virus. The death certificate diagnosis became: "post necrotic [infectious] cirrhosis secondary to chronic viral hepatitis."

But Lewis characterizes this as an

"exclusion diagnosis," that is, a guess. At the time there was no way (there is now) of pinpointing a virus as the cause of hepatitis.

After all the publicity about vinyl chloride 2 months after Messier died, Flahive himself had second thoughts. When asked by attorney Sweeney in mid-1974, Flahive acknowledged that the liver condition could have been due to Messier's work.

COMPANY SETTLES WITHOUT A FIGHT

Thus--had the case gone to the state Industrial Accident Board (IAB)--the argument would have rested on the real possibility that Messier was misdiagnosed.

Actually, no one knows. Neither side reviewed Mercy Hospital data to try to pinpoint what Messier had.

Attorney Sweeney didn't, he says, because it wasn't legally necessary to prove that vinyl chloride caused the apparent cirrhosis. All he had to do was have an expert argue it was "more likely than not."

And, he says, Monsanto wouldn't want to make that re-examination because they might find that vinyl chloride indeed killed Messier. The company could get a weaker conclusion by settling before the case went to the IAB.

Sweeney feels a company would not settle without a fight if they were as sure as Monsanto's lawyers were originally that the claim had no basis.

Of course, there's also Monsanto's contention, in the final settlement agreement, that it was simply cheaper to pay the claim than the legal fees to fight it. The claim was small--\$6600 plus legal fees.

(Mrs. Messier, having remarried, was eligible only for benefits from Messier's death to the date of remarriage.)

But a last-minute company move also suggests that Monsanto was indeed concerned about this case providing a stimulus for other workers. The company lawyer tried to insert some language into the final agreement saying:

"The parties are satisfied that ... a full hearing would in all likelihood demonstrate the lack of any medical evidence or statistics which would in any way relate this employee's death to his work. ... [Mrs. Messier] acknowledges the unlikelihood she could obtain a qualified expert to support the alleged claim."

Sweeney called this "tantamount to a lie" & refused to include it. Monsanto then accepted Sweeney's reason for the settlement: the cost of hearing "novel, unique, & complex medical & legal questions without legal precedent in the Commonwealth."

PUBLIC IGNORANCE IS COMPANY BLISS

So, it may never be known what killed Clarence Messier. But experts like Lewis are certain there are workers who are mistakenly assumed by their doctors & families to have died from alcohol, viruses, & such, when in fact their work was the real killer.

Without the full public airing of the issues such as this case would have provided, the general ignorance about what may be a wide-spread occupational disease remains intact.

And all for only \$6600 (plus legal fees of course). To an enormous international chemicals company, that must seem like a real bargain.

adapted from an article by Peter Friedland



"The guys in the raw mill are getting higher than a kite on our last grinding aid additive, Jerry."

IS YOUR JOB MAKING YOU SICK?

Headaches, dizziness, stomach trouble, problems with your ears, eyes, lungs, or skin may be caused by materials you work with or by conditions in the job.

TALK TO YOUR DIRECTOR.

for more information.

MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH (MASSCOSH)
323 HIGH ST., HOLYOKE, MONDAYS & FRIDAYS 1-5 PM; CALL 536-3736 ANYTIME



Pressure to Win Right to Know

OSHA, IT SEEMS, HAS PUT OUR RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT CHEMICALS ON THE BACK BURNER.

Health & safety groups around the country have petitioned for the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) to require labeling & full information about workplace chemicals & their dangers. OSHA did circulate a draft regulation & promised hearings.

But big business pressure made them stop. The health & safety groups are now asking OSHA chief Bingham for firm commitments & a time-table for action.

To help, please contact MassCOSH (see box above).

Seabrook - from page 1

American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees.

Jerry Gordon of the Amalgamated Meatcutters & Butchers Union spoke: "We have to counter the big lie that the labor movement is the enemy of the anti-nuclear movement. The enemies of this movement are the same as the enemies of the labor movement. They are the big corporations, & the politicians who carry out their desires."

United Mine Workers representative Ken Hunter called the jobs angle that utility companies push "a down-right lie! Coal produces 40% more jobs than nuclear power plants."

Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, & Utah Phillips led the rally in songs.

PART OF OCCUPATION

The rally was part of a 3-day legal occupation/restoration by 8000 Clamshell Alliance members, including at least 350 Western Mass. residents.

It took 4 hours for the thousands of people to march onto the site--with shouts of encouragement from local residents who lined the street. They organized into homesites & regions, pitched their tents, planted trees, & set up alternative energy displays.

Last year 1414 demonstrators were arrested for occupying the site. This year, New Hampshire officials, made a compromise so they would not have to deal with mass arrests.

On June 26, 2000 occupiers traveled to Manchester, N.H., where the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was holding hearings on whether to suspend Seabrook construction. They marched through the streets, stopping first in front of the Public Service Co., the principle builder/utility company.

They then encircled the Federal Courthouse where the NRC was meeting. The NRC is expected to decide Seabrook's fate by July 30.

To get involved, contact Susan Garvey or Dave Potvin, Hampden County Alternative Energy Coalition, 532-3635.

Monsanto Cancer Victim Wants Union Help

5

WHAT DO YOU DO AFTER DECADES OF WORK THAT SPREAD CANCER THROUGH YOUR BODY?

Stanley Bycenski, 58, considers the cancer throughout his body to be work-related. During 26 years at Monsanto-Springfield, mainly in Maintenance as a pipe-fitter or carpenter, Stanley was exposed to every chemical used & made there.

Since last December he's been out on sick leave & has applied for a medical retirement. Atty. Morton Sweeney is representing him in a Workers' Compensation claim. Sweeney also represented Clarence Messier's widow (story on page 4).

His union contract also has provisions for him to receive 80-100% of his pay if he wins the Comp claim. Because he needs union action to get that supplement from Monsanto, & union support right now, Stanley wrote the following letter to his president, Joseph Bernardo.

DEAR PRESIDENT BERNARDO,

I wish to appeal to you as President of my Union [International Union of Electrical Workers Local 288] for advice, support, & financial assistance. As you know, I have been on sick leave since December 1977, have had one

operation, & have completed a second series of radiation therapy treatments for prostatic cancer.

Because this type of cancer is one of many which has been found in excess among former Monsanto-Springfield workers by both a federal study (NIOSH) &



Monsanto's own study, I consider my illness to be work-related.

Therefore, I have taken the necessary preliminary steps to file a claim with the Industrial Accident Board for Worker's Compensation benefits. Needless to say, this type of case is both difficult & costly, since vast amounts of research & testimony of many experts will probably be required, if Monsanto denies my claim.

I call upon Local 288 for financial support to defray the cost of this investigation, not only for myself, but for past, present, & future victims who may benefit from my action.

I also request the necessary steps be taken to assure that the supplement pay provided for in Art. 17, Sec. 17 of the Union contract is provided.

It is my understanding, as well, that a separate agreement has been in force for many years (copy requested) which further entitles me to 100% of my pay, since if my cancer is work-related, it is through no fault of mine.

Would appreciate your immediate attention & action on these matters. Thanking you in advance,

Yours truly,
Stanley Bycenski

NO SUPPORT

Bernardo answered that the union could not give any funds. He also wrote, "the Local Union has yet to receive any conclusive evidence from any studies conducted by various groups, indicating that the cancer of our employees is work-related."

Stanley's other requests went unanswered. His letter was not read at a union meeting & the members are generally not aware of his plight.

After years of activity in the union, Stanley feels let down. Union officers, perhaps, are afraid to rock the boat--Monsanto, after all, is a huge wealthy global corporation.

But that's all the more reason for it to take responsibility for the health of its workers, who actually produce the wealth its owners control. And that's all the more reason for the union to be aggressive.

Monsanto has tried to put obstacles in the way of any group seeking the truth, including a rank & file group of employees & the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH).

To fight back requires an informed, active, concerned union & labor movement. Certainly a first step would be to read Stanley's letter at a union meeting.

All Monsanto workers who want to pursue the cancer issue at Monsanto should feel free to contact MassCOSH (see box on page 4).

Investigate Your Workplace



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO INSPECT YOUR WORKPLACE FOR HAZARDS. The people who are best qualified to identify dangerous situations are the workers who have to face them daily.

The first step is to collect the information on hazards in a well organized notebook. These facts can then be used to pressure management & help solve the problems.

In the notebook be as specific as possible. Note the exact location, the people affected, the probable cause, & the possible solution, & whether it is an occasional or daily problem.

Questionnaires are available from MassCOSH that can help you find out from other workers what problems they have & how widespread the problems are. These questionnaires may also arouse interest among fellow workers.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Start with spotting the most obvious problems. Ask yourself & others questions like: Is the noise loud? Do vapors or fumes smell? make you dizzy? sleepy? give you a headache? Does the dust, smoke, or vapors make

you cough or sneeze? make your throat dry? or hurt your eyes?

The more hidden hazards should then be spotted. Is the machine safe? Does it have guards? Does it work correctly? What about the wiring? Is the on-off switch easy for the operator to reach? Is the floor clear? Are exits clear & marked?

Is protective gear (goggles, masks) provided? Is an operator given enough training to run the machine safely? Does the job have to be done too fast to be safe? Is there a clean place to eat? Are there enough bathrooms & washing facilities? Are they clean?

Also excessive heat, cold & radiation should be checked.

Speed up or slow down rotations can cause accidents too & should be noted. A record of accidents helps identify hidden or repeated hazards & is useful in workers compensation cases.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Ask workers about mild symptoms like headaches, frequent colds, cough, dizziness, or skin irritations. The same complaints from a few workers in an area may be traced to a cause.

Health problems are often related to chemicals, oils & solvents used. It is important to note all facts given on the label. Also such information as where it is used, how it is used, how often, the type of container it is in, & people's complaints about it is important.

Determining what problems are the most serious & immediate threats to health & safety, & which problems people are most angry about is a good place to start in working to eliminate the hazards.

This article is adapted from *How to Look at Your Workplace*, a booklet by Urban Planning Aid. It is available for 80¢ from MassCOSH (see box p.4).

Some Work Related Health Problems

	SYMPTOMS
Skin	redness, dryness, itching, ulcers, skin cancer
Eyes	redness, irritation, watering, grainy feeling, "welder's flash"
Ears	ringing, temporary deafness, hearing loss
Teeth & Gums	corrosion of tooth enamel, blue gums
Nose & Throat	sneezing, coughing, sore throat, nasal cancer
Chest & Lungs	wheezing, congestion, dry cough, shortness of breath on mild exercise, flu-like symptoms ("metal fume fever")
Head	dizziness, headache
Fingers	loss of circulation, numbness, swelling
Bones	arthritis
Muscles & Back	soreness, strain
Nervous system	stress, nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness, tremors, speech changes
Reproductive System	miscarriage, irregularities in menstruation, damage to fetus or chromosomes, sterilization

	COMMON CAUSES
	solvents, epoxies, oil, fiberglass, caustic soda, nickel, mineral oils, arsenic, pitch, tar, radiation
	smoke, gases (ozone), fumes (ammonia), metal dust, acids, ultraviolet radiation
	excessive noise
	acid fumes, cellulose acetate production, lead poisoning
	ozone, ammonia, solvents, caustic soda, dusts, hardwood dusts and resins
	cotton dust, TDI, detergent enzymes, beryllium, solvents
	long-term exposure to mineral dust (e.g., asbestos), metal oxides from welding
	solvents, ozone, heat exhaustion, noise
	vibration from rivet guns, etc., vinyl chloride gas
	excessive vibration, constant dampness
	excessive or improper lifting, bending; vibration
	speed up, piece work rates, noise
	metal poisoning (lead, mercury)
	lead, pesticides, radiation, anesthetic gas, polystyrene production, xylene, some solvents
	benzene, lead, mercury, radiation
	radiation

MassCOSH Workshops

MASSCOSH IS PRESENTING A SERIES OF EDUCATIONALS.

The first series is with member local United Electrical Workers (UE) 274, Greenfield. These educationals are available to any local & can cover a variety of health & safety problems. Topics include "How to Use OSHA" & "Health & Safety Committees & Contract Clauses". MassCOSH will work with individuals & locals to help discover & solve health & safety problems in the shop. Contact MassCOSH (see box on page 4).

Work Kills