

COMMITTEE: PUBLIC ISSUES COMMITTEE
CO-CHAIRMEN: ALLAN K. JONAS
ROBERT V.P. HUTTER, M.D.

DATE: FEBRUARY 10, 1984



RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In consideration of a statement on Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Regulations restricting participation in initiative and referendum, the Public Issues Committee recommends the following:

RESOLVED: The American Cancer Society expresses deep concern and objection to the complete prohibition of participation in referenda and other procedures contained in Section 950.101 (N) (iv) of the CFC Regulations and urges the Office of Personnel Management to:
(a) Rescind this prohibition, (b) Revise it to allow participation of legitimate, categorical health agencies to participate in such procedures as may represent health matters, or matters affecting their abilities to carry out their vital, private sector work, or
(c) Agree to exempt the national categorical voluntary health agencies from regulation under Section 950.101 (N) (iv) and to allow these agencies to function under existing federal legislation covering lobbying, initiative and referenda activities by 501(c)(3) organizations.

2. In consideration of a Society position on Superfund - the Federal government fund for cleaning toxic waste sites, the Public Issues Committee recommends the following:

RESOLVED: The American Cancer Society urges the Congress to approve legislation that will either extend the funding of the Superfund program or establish programs of equal or greater effectiveness, in order to continue efforts to identify and cleanup waste sites that are designated as hazardous to health and the environment.

3. In anticipation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) request for comments on proposed regulations on Benzene and Asbestos, the Public Issues Committee recommends the following comments:

BENZENE: Within the past three months, evidence has appeared from three highly competent laboratories (University of Bologna, New York University and the National Toxicology Program) that neoplasms of a variety of organs occur in animals exposed to benzene.

So far human data have been limited to the serious leukemia hazards of benzene exposure, and data are not available concerning risk of other neoplasms in humans. These animal observations, raising the question of broad carcinogenicity of the chemical, should additionally spur us to seek reduction

of benzene exposure. In this regard, we recognize that the chemical industry has already made much progress in controlling benzene exposure and look to extension of such efforts.

Scientists widely hold that there is no known "safe" limit of exposure to a carcinogen. This, together with the 6 years delay already suffered in establishing an effective standard, adds urgency to the requirement that all avoidable benzene exposure be avoided. We support efforts of the Department of Labor to reduce permissible levels of benzene exposure to the lowest levels feasible.

ASBESTOS: The Department of Labor has proposed a lowering of permissible exposure to asbestos to 500,000 fibers per cubic meter, from its present level of 2,000,000 fibers. The American Cancer Society strongly supports the Department's intention to limit worker exposure to this cancer agent. It urges the Department to go further, however, and to consider the rapid implementation of the recommendation of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to prevent exposure above 100,000 fibers per cubic meter. Even this would allow inhalation of almost a million fibers each day by each worker.

There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos. The serious asbestos cancer "epidemic" we are now experiencing is the result of inadequate control of exposures in previous decades. ACS research indicates that from now to beyond the turn of the century we may anticipate more than 9,000 excess deaths of asbestos-induced cancer each year, an unhappy legacy of the past. We should not add additional avoidable deaths to the burden of cancer that is anticipated.

All preventable asbestos exposure should be avoided. To the extent this is not achieved, cancer will occur - cancer of the lung, esophagus, stomach, colon, larynx, oro-pharynx, kidney, and mesothelium. And in view of the irreversibility of cancer risk once there has been exposure, we concur in the Department's urgency in seeking to reduce exposure as rapidly as possible.

The Department has used the word "Emergency" for its proposed standard; the Society appreciates this recognition that prevention of cancer is truly an immediate matter. For the same reason, the Society also supports the Environmental Protection Agency in its efforts to discontinue nonessential uses of asbestos.

4. In consideration of ACS comment on Ethylene Dibromide (EDB) the Public Issues Committee recommends the following statement:

Ethylene dibromide (EDB) is a halogenated hydrocarbon that has been widely used as a fumigant in citrus fruit harvest

and on stored grain to prevent insect infestation. It is also used as an anti-knock additive and as an industrial chemical in production of dyes and solvents.

Three major animal studies have shown that EDB causes cancer in animals. It is also a mutagen causing genetic changes in bacteria, plants and mammalian cells and causes birth defects in offspring of exposed pregnant animals. Available epidemiologic studies are not adequate to determine EDB's carcinogenicity in humans or its effect on reproductive functions in humans. A very closely allied chemical, 1, 2-Dibromo-3-Chloropropane (DBCP), which causes cancer in animals, has been shown to cause lowered sperm counts in humans.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in October, 1983 ended the registration of EDB for use in treatment on stored grain and on grain milling machinery, and for ground application as pest control. They moved to cancel its use as a fruit fumigant by September, 1984.

The American Cancer Society believes that the exposure to EDB should be reduced to the lowest possible levels.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. Dr. Robert V.P. Hutter, along with Dr. Arthur I. Holleb, reviewed the draft on the proposed ACS Nutrition and Cancer recommendations. The Committee voted to commend the report to the Medical and Scientific Committee for action.
2. Dr. David P. Rall, Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, discussed "Scientific Problems in the Utilization of Animal Data in Evaluation of Human Cancer."
3. The Honorable Birch Bayh, ACS Washington Representative, discussed the status of legislation before the U.S. Congress as it enters its 2nd Session. The Senator also reported on the "Visit to Washington IV" program which took place February 6 and 7.

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